FAMOUS DOG, 5 | SLICE OF LIFE, 28 | LIVING SPACES, 43

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Each has a story

Volunteer researches history of those on WWI memorial

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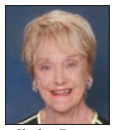
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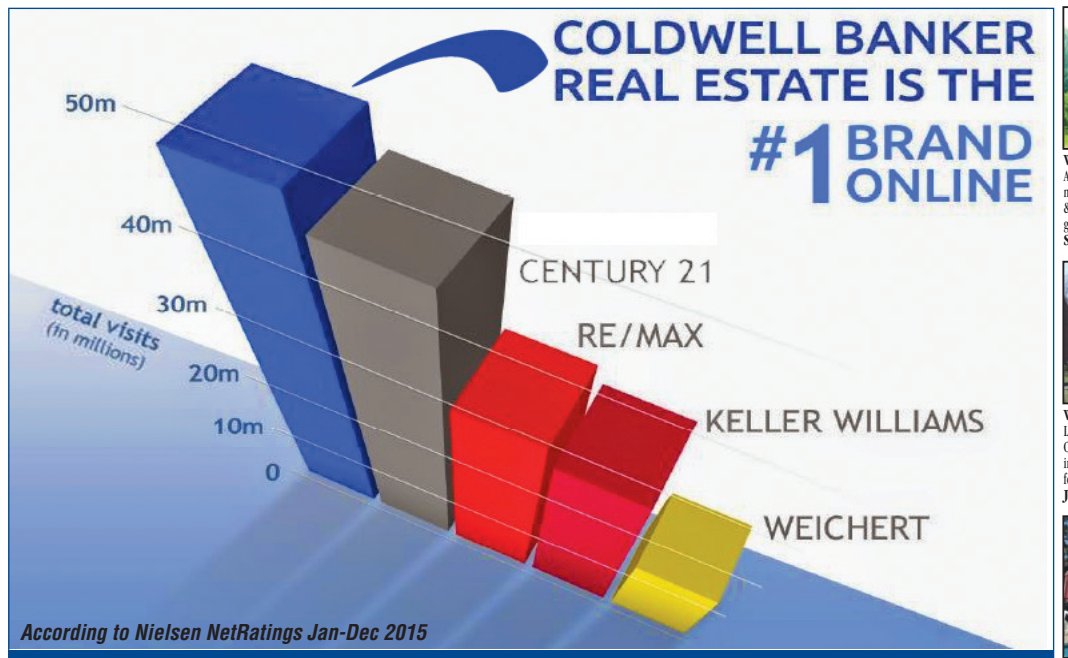

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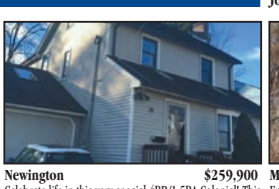
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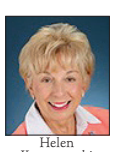
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QUOTE OF NOTE:

"They really have a powerful influence over one another." - *David Dubos*

See story page 6

ON THE COVER

Cora J. Belden Public Library Director Mary Hogan joins with Rocky Hill Historical Society's Maureen Mullen and Robert C. Herron on a new expanded study of all of the names listed on the World War I memorial.

Photo by Lisa Brisson
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Photos by Mark Jahne

Sgt. Joseph Phelps, left, and Officer Jon Lammers and stand alongside a Rocky Hill police cruiser. Lammers is the lead staff member directing the department through its efforts to gain state accreditation as a top-notch law enforcement agency.

RHPD seeks accreditation

Working to follow best practices and standards in law enforcement

by Mark Jahne
Editor

It's one thing for a police department to claim that it operates at the highest standards and level of professionalism. It's quite another thing to document and prove it.

That's exactly what the Rocky Hill Police Department is doing as it seeks to gain official accreditation from the Connecticut Police Officer Standards and Training Council, also known as POST-C. This is a voluntary process law enforcement agencies engage in to seek recognition of professional excellence.

There are several levels and the department's focus is on Tier 1 Liability. If that is successful, RHPD can seek higher levels of accreditation in the future. It is already working on Tier 2.

A visiting team of POST-C assessors spent Feb. 25 at police headquarters as part of the process. They reviewed written materials, interviewed people, accepted community comment, and visited offices and other places where compliance with their standards can be witnessed.

Accreditation, if granted, is valid for three years. During that time, RHPD will be required to submit annual reports attesting to its continuing compliance with all applicable standards.

There is a huge amount of research and paperwork required for this process and the project manager is Officer Jon Lammers. His file cabinet is stuffed with the materials required to support the department's application.

"This is our first one. It's been my job to look at it for the last three years," he said.

"It's really to make sure your department is in line with best policies and practices. The policies needed updating," he added. "It helps the department liability-wise if we were to get into a jam."

Sgt. Joseph Phelps said going through accreditation helps law enforcement agencies keep up with the latest policy changes on topics such as domestic violence cases and the use of Tasers.

"This is all preventative. This is to make sure that our officers are following guidelines," he added.

Keeping up with all these policies and standards requires constant training, Phelps said. All of the applicable policies are available online and officers in the field can access them using the laptop computers in their patrol cars.

"It's proving that you're doing what you say you're doing. It's an accountability thing," Lammers said.

"It's proving that you're doing what you say you're doing. It's an accountability thing."

–Officer Jon Lammers

Phelps talked about some of the positive changes made since the beginning of the process. They vary in terms of complexity and importance.

One change was to place a security fence around the department's emergency generator to make sure that no one tampers with it, especially during power outages. Another was to construct a cage to secure impounded vehicles.

"We made a lot of changes like that. They required some time and effort to comply," Phelps said. "A lot of this is to show our day-to-day things are being properly documented in our reports. It's a big commitment, you have to stick with it."

Lammers said it is beneficial for everyone in town that the department seeks and acquires accreditation. Then the public will know without a doubt that RHPD follows the best practices and operates at the highest possible level.

Both men hope that the department will advance to the point where it can some day seek national and not just state accreditation. They firmly believe that operating in this manner will help it avoid major issues and problems such as those reported in other cities and towns around the country.

The Rocky Hill Police Department has 36 sworn personnel as well as support staff including dispatchers and records personnel. Both men said a larger department would designate several officers to work on accreditation, but here Lammers is, for the most part, a one-man operation. **RHL**

Famous dog visits students at magnet school

The room was abuzz when the famous pooch calmly walked into the room, sniffing at the crowd. Jonathan the XIV, official mascot of the University of Connecticut, was in the house.

Jonathan and his student handlers from Alpha Phi Omega, a co-ed service fraternity, came to the CREC Academy of Aerospace & Engineering Elementary School to thank the second grade classes for assisting the Connecticut Children's Medical Center through UConn.

This opportunity was made possible because of the school's relationship with UConn NEAG School of Education students Erin Holden and Cristina Eberhart. They are pre-service teachers who, through an internship, are working closely on curriculum efforts with literacy coach Sarah Mangiafico and her colleagues at the local CREC school.

The UConn students encouraged 10 second grade enrichment students to hold a JonaTHON, a fund-raising effort that is part of UConn's annual HuskyTHON. The HuskyTHON raises money for CCMC and JonaTHON is the name given to smaller fundraisers organized by students in grades K-12.

Academy students raised $380 for the cause. They also asked their peers to create cards for patients at CCMC and assembled "joy kits" for children who need to stay at the hospital for an extended period of time.

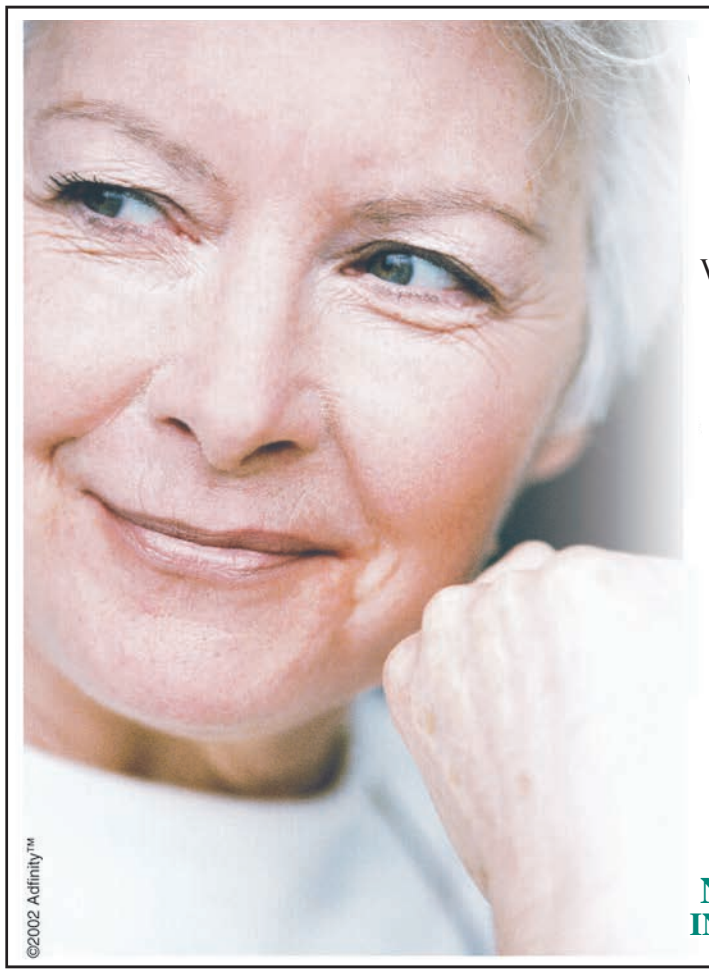
These kits include items made by students and their parents, such as soap and bead projects, and other items, such as UConn window stickers, small toys, books, and jars that contain daily words of encouragement.

The enrichment group traveled to UConn to present their check at the dance-a-thon and that earned them a canine visit. The current Jonathan, a purebred Siberian husky, is 2 years old and was born in Arkansas.

The tradition of having a live husky as the university's mascot dates from 1935. **RHL**

Photo by Mark Jahne

Jonathan XIV, the official mascot of the University of Connecticut, paid a visit to the CREC Academy of Aerospace & Engineering Elementary School on Brook Street.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Photos by Allie Rivera

Sophomore Dillon Cerpa, 17, used the rowing machine in the weight room at Rocky Hill High School as his classmates cheered him on.

LIFE in the classroom

Unified physical education class provides multiple benefits

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

At 7:30 on a rainy Friday morning, the halls of Rocky Hill High School were muted with an air of sleepiness, but the weight room offered an entirely different atmosphere. Music blasted from a small set of speakers as treadmills whirred and weights clanged together.

"Nice job, Dillon," senior Trevor Whalen called out as fellow classmate Dillon Cerpa pulled back on the rowing machine.

The collection of students who were in the room are part of the Unified Physical Education class now in its second year at the high school. State regulations mandate that students with special needs be provided an adaptive physical education class, which is also provided throughout elementary and middle school, but this class offers something different.

"It's an adaptive physical education class that is joined with a peer class," David Dubos said. "This is a class that, as an elective, would be a great opportunity for students at both ends."

His is a physical education teacher and district supervisor for the Department of Physical Education. Dubos learned about a similar program in Glastonbury that pairs special needs students with their typical peers and immediately wanted to bring it to town.

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EQUAL HOUSING OPPORTUNITY

Photo by Allie Rivera

Senior Kassandra Veneziano, 17, helped 15-year-old Marc Lapuma correct his form in the weight room during the Unified Physical Education class.

opportunity for these kids," Dubos said. "The minute I mentioned this they were like, 'start writing curriculum.'"

The class meets first thing in the morning every day and runs as a full-year course for special education students and as a half-year elective for the peers.

"It's a good way to start the day," 18-year-old Trevor said. "They pretty much make your day every day."

Dubos said that by having the peers in the class, many of the special education students are motivated in a way that he and his fellow teachers could not create on their own.

"For a lot of the kids, being motivated is sometimes an issue, but having them go in with a peer, they can get them to do almost anything," he said. "They really have a powerful influence over one another."

According to Dubos, by providing special needs students these opportunities, they are empowered to work harder in a safe and supportive environment. This ultimately helps both their academic and personal growth.

"It's such a huge positive thing for a kid who in a typical class might feel like they're failing all the time," he said.

In addition to positive benefits to their physical health, Dubos said students in the adaptive program also get the benefit of befriending peers who they may not have the chance to get to know in other classes.

"They really have a powerful influence over one another."

–David Dubos

"Our adaptive kids love the relationships they develop in this class," he said.

That level of friendship can be seen at any time, such as when Crystal Vinci, 16, took pictures with her friend Melanie Holmes, 15, or when sophomore Matt Lanciotto cheered on Christian Deliseo, 15, as he practiced his balance.

"I like that I make friends in this class," Dan Calafiore, 15, said.

While the positive benefits for special needs students are a large part of the reasoning behind the Unified P.E. class, Dubos said it is also the benefits for the peers that set the program apart.

"It promotes a culture of empathy and respect here," he said. "For some kids, it's also given them insight into potential future careers."

Trevor is one such student. He started taking the Unified P.E. elective during its first semester at the request of teacher Catherine Mader, who thought he would be a good fit for the program.

"This has really started my involvement with special ed and then I've joined other programs since then, like Unified Sports and Best Buddies," Trevor said. "Now I plan my schedule around it in guidance. I tell them I need Unified P.E."

After graduation, he plans to study special education, and he said this class set him on that pathway.

Another peer, Kassandra Veneziano, 17, joined the class because she was looking for more opportunities to interact with

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Khubaib Yusuf Mapara, M.D.
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Dr. Mapara received his medical degree from Aga Khan University, Karachi, Pakistan, and completed his residency in general surgery at Vanderbilt University Medical Center, Nashville, Tennessee. After residency, Dr. Mapara earned a fellowship in vascular surgery at University of Pittsburgh Medical Center, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania.

Board certified, Dr. Mapara is a member of Saint Francis Medical Group.

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students with special needs.

"I wanted to be on a more personal level with them," she said. "It's great in the spring because we get to just take laps around the track and we can really talk to them about their day."

The peers in the Unified P.E. class go through a brief screening process and, according to Dubos, there is not always room for everyone who is interested.

"We want to make sure their intentions are good and that they are responsible," he said. "Typically, though, it attracts kids who are kind, caring, empathetic people."

Along with the social and emotional opportunities for the students to interact with each other, he said the class also helps to build leadership skills. Throughout the semester, peers are able to design and lead the class, with the assistance and supervision of the teacher, to provide adaptive games for everyone.

"That's what we should be doing here is opening up their eyes. They're getting the skills of learning how to think outside the box and being the one to actually learn how to stand up there and teach. There are all these skills these kids are getting out of this and they aren't even realizing it," Dubos said.

He credits the class with having a positive effect in the school that goes beyond the walls of the gymnasium or weight room and he's excited to think about what the future will bring.

"We've created a culture of empathy and caring and community service," Dubos said. "We piloted the class last year and it's here to stay." RHL

Photos by Allie Rivera

Above: In addition to the physical and academic benefits of the Unified P.E. class at Rocky Hill High School are the social benefits. Friendships have started to pop up among students, including 15-year-old Melanie Holmes, left, and Crystal Vinci, 16.

Right: Christian Deliseo, left, and Matt Lanciotto used their time in the weight room to practice balance, then leaned on each other for a photo.

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Rocky Hill High School seniors Steve Tomastik and Gabriella Caron will be honored for their musical and artistic pursuits at the Connecticut Association of Schools' annual High School Arts Banquet.

Photo by Allie Rivera

Students of the month

High school pair recognized for their artistic pursuits

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

The Connecticut Association of Schools will host its annual High School Arts Banquet at the Aqua Turf Club in Plantsville April 5 and two students from local will be in attendance. Rocky Hill High School seniors Steve Tomastik and Gabriella Caron, both 17, earned recognition for their respective works in music and visual art.

"I was shocked when I heard," Gabriella said. "I'm excited. I haven't really been to a banquet like this before."

Primarily a sculptor, she has taken three art classes and four independent studies in art during her time at Rocky Hill High, but she said she has been actively creating art since kindergarten.

"For me, it's basically expressing feelings," she said. "You can interpret art however you want."

Gabriella credits her father's career as a carpenter with piquing her interest in both art and architecture, the fields in which she hopes to double major next year.

She is active in a variety of artistic, athletic and community-oriented clubs. As founder and president of the Ceramics Club, she helps to plan and host fundraisers throughout the year.

"For Valentine's Day we made Jolly Rancher roses, and we're going to sculpt bowls for a chili cook off," she said. "We're raising money to buy an extruder for the art room. It's a machine that, for lack of a better word, poops out clay."

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Art is an important part of her life and she hopes to continue creating and studying it in the coming years.

"Most of my art is creepy," she said with a small laugh. "I'd say it's pretty dark."

Despite the self-proclaimed darkness in her work, Gabriella is positive in her other pursuits, including as captain of the cheerleading squad. She also participated in youth cheerleading when she was younger.

"My grandmother was a cheerleader in high school and she would talk about how fun it was," Gabriella recalled.

Additionally, she has played goalie on the lacrosse team since her sophomore year and is now a captain.

"People were nagging me to play," she said. "I used to do track and field, but to me it was just running in circles. I wanted something else."

When not putting her latest creation in the kiln or guarding the goal, she spends her time working with students with special needs. She participates in the school's Unified Physical Education class and was a member of the Best Buddies club before commitments to her part-time job interfered.

Because of her hard work and talent in art, Gabriella was admitted to the National Art Honor Society, which she currently serves as secretary.

Outside of school, she is a waitress and host at the Red Lobster restaurant in Wethersfield as well as a lifeguard at the YMCA in Middletown. During her free time, she volunteers at the soup kitchen and food pantries in Middletown and at Atria Greenridge Place in its Alzheimer's wing.

Steve is also excited about the upcoming banquet. A percussionist, he has taken three music classes during his time at RHHS as well as participating in numerous musical extracurricular activities.

"I like that with music there's no right or wrong about it," he said. "I'm a jazz musician primarily, and I really like the freedom that I get and the artistry I can explore."

His musical journey began as a young child during days spent with his grandmother.

"My grandma is a music teacher, she's a pianist, and she asked me and my brother if we wanted music lessons," Steve recalled. "We didn't really think it would go anywhere, but I ended up really liking it."

He began taking private drum lessons at the age of 7 and in middle school he joined the jazz band, a form of music he considers his favorite.

"Music and other art allows you to go your own way in however you want to express yourself," he said.

When he reached high school, Steve also joined the marching band and pep band and this year he was chosen as the percussion section leader for the former. For all of his contributions to the music department, he was awarded the Jack Gerster Award and his name was added to a plaque hanging in the school.

He hopes to major in music education in college, but is open to other opportunities should they interest him.

"I'm excited for college so I can explore anything that comes my way," he said. "Even if I don't stay with music education, though, I'd want to be in bands in college and continue as a hobby."

Along with his musical pursuits, Steve is also involved in a variety of athletic and academic clubs, including the cross-country, track and swim teams, as well as the Newspaper Club, French Club, National Honor Society, Tri-M National Music Honor Society and Family Career Community Leaders of America.

"I think it's really important to try new things," he said. "I try to be a well-rounded person in all aspects of life."

Outside of school, Steve works as a lifeguard in town and on Sundays during the summer he helps students with special needs in the pool. For the past three years he was also an active member of the youth group at St. James Church.

Both students said that they are excited about the recognition they will be receiving at the banquet. They are grateful to the teachers they have encountered during their tenure at Rocky Hill High School.

"Our school has really special teachers here," Steve said. "They try really hard to connect with students. They're amazing." **RHL**

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Updating technology

Town's website and telephone system undergoes upgrade

by Mark Jahne
Editor

Russ Ford is the town's director of technology and facilities.

One of the first observations Town Manager Guy Scaife made when he was hired a couple of years ago was that the technology in town hall and other municipal buildings was outdated and inadequate. He made it a priority to rectify that problem.

The consulting firm BlumShapiro was brought in to perform an audit of the town's information technology in 2014. One result of that was the hiring of Russ Ford in November of that year.

He was hired by Scaife, with authorization from the Town Council, to fill the newly created position of director of technology and facilities. The goal was to make local government more efficient and cost effective.

"We've done a ton of stuff. The money was budgeted. Some was not budgeted, but the town manager helped us find the money. We're in a good place now," Ford said.

"We started by looking at all of the various systems. It was obvious right away that technology had not been a priority," he said. "We had a ton of Windows XP machines."

That computer operating system is no longer supported by Microsoft, manufacturer of some of the most commonly used software in government, business and private homes.

"I think they spent more time trying to fix things and keep them running," Ford said about prior staff efforts.

There was also the need to standardize because some computers and software were newer than others and those with older technology sometimes could not open documents created on newer computer technology.

"Another thing that was very obvious was the phone system," Ford said.

The town had an old-fashioned kind of agreement with its telephone provider that required it to pay per

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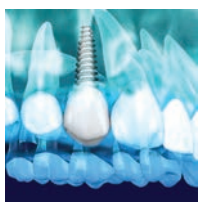

As one of his advanced procedures is dental implants, Dr. Michalski is a leader in his field. He has attained Diplomate status in the International College of Oral Implantology, the highest honor in the field. He is a Misch Fellow, a graduate of numerous post doctorate training curriculums and has trained and studied with the best implant surgeons in the world.

"I am able to show people what their dental implant options are and change their lives. We use art and science to take a patient from a smile they dislike to one they love by creating their perfect smile," explains Dr. Michalski.

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line, as well as extra costs for various features. He realized that changing to a more modern system would not only improve efficiency, but save money.

Ford said the town is now saving $3,000 a month in phone charges, money that is being used to pay for the $125,000 cost of the new system. Once the system is fully paid off in four years, that savings will continue to benefit the town.

They were able to add more features, too. The phone and computer system run on the same data network and the entire server and storage system was replaced.

That required a $105,000 investment to upgrade the switching infrastructure but, like the phone system, the savings will over time pay off the cost.

"Another big one was the [town] website. The difference between the old one and the new one is night and day," he said. "It saves paper, time and money."

Residents can view www.rockyhillct.gov to see how it has changed. The idea was to make it cleaner and more user friendly. A new documents on demand feature was added so that people can sign up for email notifications.

Ford is trying to get as many forms as possible onto the website in a manner that allows them to be completed and submitted online. The old website had forms, but they needed to be downloaded and filled out by hand.

"We expanded our wireless network to cover the police department, town garage and parks garage," he said.

Another new wrinkle is automated record keeping of the maintenance performed on all town vehicles.

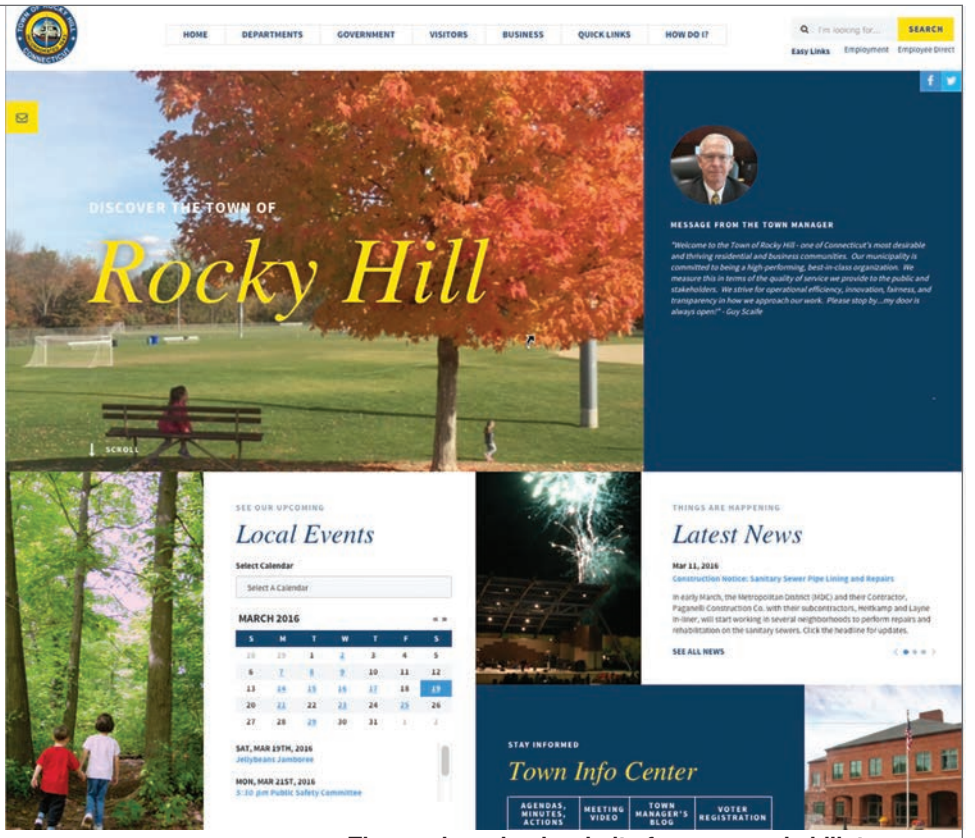
The town dropped Cox Communications as its technology provider and replaced it with a system owned and operated by state government. That change came along with a $19,000 grant for new switching gear and fiber optic cables.

Ford said the town is saving $665 a month on Internet costs. The change also comes with a 1,000 percent increase in bandwidth, from 10 megabytes to one gigabyte.

In addition, Ford cleaned up the morass of copiers and printers previously scattered all over town hall , resulting in a $12,000 annual savings. There was another $4,000 saved because fewer toner cartridges are needed.

"We removed 50 desktop printers," he said.

A backup system was also installed, something he said did not previously exist. Modern firewalls and an email archive system are other new features. **RHL**



The newly revised website for www.rockyhillct.gov

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Photos by Allie Rivera

Ella Tine, left, and Rita Thibodeau are participants in the senior craft class, now taking place once a month through Rocky Hill Parks and Recreation.

Not just for children

Parks and Recreation offers crafting class for senior citizens

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

The activity room in the Rocky Hill Senior Center was abuzz with laughter and conversation. Seated around a collection of folded tables were women taking part in the new Senior Crafts Class offered through the town Parks and Recreation Department.

"I just think it's great that we have the opportunity to find out that we're more creative than we thought," crafter Barbara Ortner said.

Started in October, the class meets on the second Tuesday of each month and allows attendees to create a featured project. On this particular March morning, they made an Easter painting with a white rabbit.

"I think the best thing is that even though we're all doing the same project, each one comes out a little bit differently and I love to see the end results," Lisa Roncaioli said.

She is the department's preschool director and senior crafts leader.

According to Brittany Sanderson, an administrative assistant, the program came about from both a desire to create richer experiences within the senior center as well as a request from that crowd for more diverse programming.

"We wanted to get more people involved and seniors told us they wanted new activities," Sanderson said. "We saw that we didn't have

anything on Tuesdays, so we came up with the idea of this crafts class."

Sanderson, Roncaioli and other Parks and Recreation staff come up with the themed crafts to be created each month. The cost for participants is between $3 and $5 to purchase the materials.

"And the crafts we make are nice pieces," Roncaioli said. "If you bought something like this at a store, it would be triple the price."

Since the first senior crafts class in October, which had only three participants, the program has enjoyed steady growth and now averages 11 crafters each month.

"It's really been word of mouth that's made it more popular," Sanderson said. "Now we've put it in our newsletter and we're going to be putting it on Facebook."

Many of the women who participate in the class were already active members at the senior center, including Ortner, who participates in its knitting club.

"We've made lap blankets for the hospital, and hats and scarves for people in need, and we've even done caps for soldiers in Afghanistan," Ortner said.

In addition to the creative aspect that the class and various senior clubs provide, the social aspect is, for many, just as important.

"It's a great way for the elderly to communicate with other people, it gets them out of the house and it's just fun for an hour."

–Angie Guzzardi

"It's so good for the elderly," participant Angie Guzzardi said. "It's a great way for the elderly to communicate with other people, it gets them out of the house and it's just fun for an hour."

"There are a lot of elderly in Rocky Hill, so it's good for them to know about these kinds of programs," she added.

"I think it's a nice way to get everyone together and have fun," Rita Thibodeau said.

For Sanderson, who helps to run the program each month, witnessing that social aspect is the best part of her job.

"I love seeing everyone socialize together and making new friends and having a good time," she said.

Both Sanderson and Roncaioli encourage older adults of all ages to attend the monthly classes, regardless of their ability level or sense of creativity.

"The crafts are geared so that everybody can do it," Roncaioli said. "No one should feel like it's something they can't do. We're here to help every step of the way."

"It's really amazing what you can do in one hour," Guzzardi said.

Looking to the coming months, Sanderson said they take each theme as it comes and don't often know far in advance what the project will be, but they always try to keep it fun and diverse. Both those who run the class and those who participate encourage senior citizens to try the program.

"You should come and try it because you never know what you can do unless you try," Ortner said. **RHL**

For more information on senior craft classes and other activities contact Parks and Recreation at 860-258-2772 or visit rockyhillct.gov/parkrec.

Maryellen Arsenault is one of the people who has discovered the class in recent months, which provides senior citizens with the opportunity to get in touch with their creative side.

Barbara and Oliver are happy in their new home.
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People notes

Gregory Faulkner was elected to the managing committee of the law firm of Robinson & Cole. He is a partner and chairman of the construction group and has served as local, national and international counsel in all aspects of construction law. He also has an active higher education practice and leads the firm's education law group.

Larissa Denisky and **Erik Evans** were named to the dean's list at Endicott College.

Rubeena Abraham, Evanna Burgwardt, Elizabeth Cicia, Crystal Flores, Sarah Gioia, Ryan Holden, Megan Husson, Shona Korr, Zachary Leveton, Jordan Massa, Angela Mihalick, Geycel Muniz, Kyra Whalen, Darci Abate and **Christina Cox** were named to the dean's list at Goodwin College.

Alina Hafeez, Gianna Kittle, Morgan Parrotta and **Brooklyn Bradley** were named to first honors at Mercy High School. **Alyssa Scandura, Madison Swilling, Madison Bradley, Eugenia Cho, Jessica Grodovich, Martha Johnson, Lan Lou, Junkai "Apple" Hu, Kellyanne Cahill** and **Julia Wenceslao** earned high honors. **Shenyang "Samantha" Zhang** achieved second honors.

Thomas Caruso, Morgan Dasilva, Jessica Markowski, Paris Kuzoian and **Stefen Lonero** were named to the dean's list at Roger Williams University.

Mark Sheehan was inducted into the Cum Laude Society at Kingswood Oxford School.

Louisa Acca was named to the dean's list at Emmanuel College.

Jacquelin Saucier, a student at the College of Saint Rose, spent Alternative Spring Break in New Orleans helping residents continue to rebuild in the aftermath of hurricanes Katrina and Rita. Saucier and the 11 other students volunteered in the Lower Ninth Ward, one of the hardest-hit parts of the city.

Gregory Faulkner

Lindsey Blustein, Jenna Marzilli and **Lillian Mckenzie** were named to the president's list at Clemson University.

Hannah Garrahy, a student at Eastern Connecticut State University, participated in the annual Kennedy Center American College Theatre Festival.

Kylie Federici and **Kate Gibson** were named to the dean's list at Emerson College.

Thomas Caruso, Morgan Dasilva, Jessica Markowski, Paris Kuzoian and **Stefen Lonero** were named to the dean's list at Roger Williams University.

Mark Sheehan was inducted into the Cum Laude Society at Kingswood Oxford School. **RHL**

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Minister wants to become a community resource

New pastor at Rocky Hill Congregational Church is a Connecticut native

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

As a young child growing up in Meriden, the Rev. Craig Cowing wanted to be an archaeologist, or possibly, a librarian like his mother.

"I didn't go directly into college. I didn't have a clear direction. That year [after high school], things crystallized," said Cowing, who became the senior pastor of Rocky Hill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, this past September.

"I fell in with a fundamentalist group and just sort of, in a general way, experienced a call to the ministry."

He attended Lycoming College in Williamsport, Pennsylvania, earning a B.A. degree in history/religion, and then attended Andover Newton Theological School in Newton Centre, Massachusetts, for his M.Div. and STM.

"I've come a long way from [fundamentalism]," said Cowing in the sunny loft reading area over his office at the church. He was officially installed in his position in February.

"[UCC is] as diametrically as opposed from fundamentalism as you can get," he added.

He recalled that, as he began to study in college, he gradually turned

The Rev. Craig Cowing is the new senior pastor of the Rocky Hill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ.

Photo by Mara Dresner

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The Rev. Craig Cowing enjoys painting religious icons and has several displayed in his office at the church.

away from fundamentalism.

"I had the chance to study the Old and New Testaments. Through that, I eventually realized that strict interpretation of the scriptures is not sustainable. It just doesn't hold up," he said.

"I studied both Greek and Hebrew in college and realizing there were variations on texts just completely destroys the possibility of a completely literalistic interpretation of the scriptures."

Cowing has served congregations in Massachusetts, Vermont, Maine and New York. Most recently, he was in Newport, New Hampshire, about three hours from here.

He spent about five-and-a-half years there and had embarked on a nationwide search for a new position. He noted that in the UCC, spiritual leaders look for jobs the way people do in other fields, sending out resumes, interviewing and the like.

He was interested in the Rocky Hill position for several reasons.

"Their interest in ministering to the community; it really functions as a community church. They have a really strong music program and faith formation program. They have a strong interest in that mission," he said.

"Having a staff [person] was an important thing, although at the time, the person who did faith formation had left, they were in the process of hiring someone else for the faith formation program. Georgette [Huie, minister for children and youth] who we hired, has a lot of experience and is doing a great job," he added.

"The congregation is also, as the search committee expressed it, interested in growing into the times in which we live. In America, religion is changing dramatically. We're learning how to minister to the community in a world that's changing incredibly rapidly. They're interested in doing that and we're working on that."

Liz Reed-Swale, co-chairwoman of the Settled Pastor Search Committee, said Cowing stood out in several ways.

"What impressed me the most was his desire to reach out to the community. When he interviewed, Craig asked about the local human services department, the town government, the Rotary Club, the historical society and the other churches in town," she recalled.

"He truly believes that a church should be in service not just to its members, but to everyone in the community. What Craig offers to the congregation is his talent and willingness to help in so many different areas. So far, he has played hand drums with our drum choir, joined us when we visited shut-ins to sing Christmas carols and worked with many different church committees to hire new staff and plan events.

"He is an avid historian, which appeals to many to who value the church's history. He has carpentry experience and seems as though he can fix anything. He is also very kind and compassionate and technologically savvy, using Facebook and email to reach out, as well as visiting people who need a pick-me-up," she added.

"Craig has a great mix of faith, pragmatism and passion for social awareness and justice. He is strong enough in his faith to be able to listen to and accept viewpoints of people from all walks of life.

"He will befriend and enjoys

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learning from not just those with whom he has something in common, but those who are very different from him as well. He is a wonderful representative of the United Church of Christ. And he's just a great guy to have around."

Cowing uses some non-traditional methods to connect with his congregation and the general community. He started a monthly harmonic healing session using singing bowls in February, which is open to the public.

"I came across one [a singing bowl] at a church fair and bought one. At the time I was learning how to meditate and it seemed to fit in very well with that. That was about 10 years ago," he said.

"From there I had the chance to buy some more. I now have a working collection of about 75. I lay them out on the carpet and play them in groups for an hour. It's a wonderful way to meditate."

There's no fee for the harmonic healing sessions, which are scheduled for the third Friday evening of each month, although participants are welcome to bring nonperishable items for donation to the Rocky Hill Food Bank. Cowing called it a non-religious program.

"You just come and meditate. I just tell them to come and breathe; that's it," he said.

Although it may sound new age, he added that it ties in perfectly with ancient texts.

"I go back to one of the quotes from the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus tells us to focus on the today. There's a corollary to the Buddhist concept of mindfulness. Be in the moment; focus on what you're doing right now," Cowing said.

"What impressed me the most was his desire to reach out to the community."

–Liz Reed-Swale

"As Americans, we have a very strong tendency, I know I do, to focus on what's ahead. You rob yourself of whatever you can get out of the moment right now. At least for a while, we push everything out of our heads and concentrate on what is in the moment right now.

"It's a very freeing thing. I don't think anybody would deny we live in a very stressful world and it's stressful out of our own creation. It's important to find ways to detox ourselves."

Cowing also is an avid painter, concentrating on religious icons.

"I use it as a form of contemplative prayer. I tend to latch onto things and when I see something, I think, 'I wonder if I can do that.' I like to copy renaissance religious art as well. Painting itself is a f orm of prayer," he said.

Cowing usually paints with acrylics, although that is not a traditional medium for icons.

He is hoping that the church will increase its presence in the community. Large banners adorn some of the outside walls with welcoming messages including "protect the environment," "care for the poor," "embrace diversity," "reject racism," "forgive often," and "share earthly and spiritual resources."

"We are what is called an open and affirming church. It is an official designation of discernment and meeting. What open and affirming means is we are open to everyone, in particular gay and lesbian people are absolutely welcome here, LBGT. The banners are meant to convey that," he said.

"The phrase the denomination uses is no matter who you are or where you are on life's journey, you are welcome here."

The church has around 300 members, with about 100 people in attendance for a typical Sunday morning service. Cowing, who lives in town with his wife, Anita Hawkins, hopes that number will grow as people see what the church is about.

"I think this church is already doing a good job ministering to the community. They've expressed a desire to be out in the community more, to have the church be more visible, to have a higher profile in the community," he said.

"We're working on that and to show that church doesn't have to be stuffy or exclusive or snobbish. Church can be fulfilling and people can find a wonderful community here." **RHL**

The Rocky Hill Congregational Church, United Church of Christ, is located at 805 Old Main St. Sunday worship is held at 10 a.m., and child care is available. For additional information call 860-529-4167 or see rhccucc.org.

- The Rocky Hill Congregational Church was established June 7, 1727, as the Stepney Parish of Wethersfield.
- The meetinghouse was built and dedicated in 1808 and cost $9,000 to construct.
- The Rev. Dr. Calvin Chapin was pastor for 56 years from 1794-1850. He participated in organizing the American Board of Commissioners for Foreign Missions in 1810, the first organized missionary society in the United States.
- The church's Austin pipe organ was dedicated in 1975.

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One Book, One Community

West Hill and Stevens elementary schools participated in One Book, One Community, event March 2. The book's title was kept secret until that morning. Both schools read the book "The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins" by Barbara Kerley as part of Read Across America Day, which is also the birthday of Dr. Seuss.

The Cora J. Belden Library partnered with the schools by offering a preschool program. The book was brought to life in the gymnasium, the cafeteria and classrooms, as students participated in a variety of related hands-on activities and projects all related to the book. As Dinosaur State Park celebrates its 50th year, the book selected has hometown significance.

Assemblies by Dinosaurs Rock, provided by the PTOs, delivered an opportunity for every student to touch fossils and even a real fossilized coprolite (dinosaur excrement). Students experienced the size of these pre-historic creatures as exactly sized replicas of the bones found across the country were viewed and set together to form skeletal limbs.

Each student received three artifacts after the assembly.

Classrooms served as art studios, dig sites and writer's workspaces for related activities. Students in kindergarten through grade 5 visited classrooms as they travelled from one activity to the next. They created poems, molds, skeletons and even solved math problems, all with dinosaurs and Waterhouse as the focus.

Students sang and danced to the "Dinosaur Stomp" and left their finger prints on a large dinosaur outline. Families were encouraged to read the book again at home to share in their child's experience. **RHL**

Courtesy photos

Who are they?

Volunteer researches names on town's World War I Memorial

By Mark Jahne
Editor

Most people gaze upon the town's World War I Memorial and see a list of names. Robert Herron looks at the memorial and sees a list of people, all of whom have their individual stories.

Herron took it upon himself to conduct intensive research into the 72 men and women listed on that stone in a project jointly sponsored by the Cora J. Belden Library and Rocky Hill Historical Society. The 100th anniversary of America's entry into "The Great War" will be celebrated a year from now on April 6, 2017.

The war had already raged for three years before the United States joined the fray. It ended in November 1918.

"We're just so thrilled that Bob came forward to do this," Library Director Mary Hogan said.

Herron began his research this past November. Much of it is already compiled in book form. He wanted to know more about the lives behind the names and said he has enjoyed a good deal of success.

He has already identified 70 of the 72 people on the stone as well as an additional 23 veterans who are not listed. Four of them are women: two were U.S. Army nurses and the other two were stenographers.

Photo by Mark Jahne

A close-up look at the World War I Memorial on the green at the intersection of Main Street and Dividend Road.

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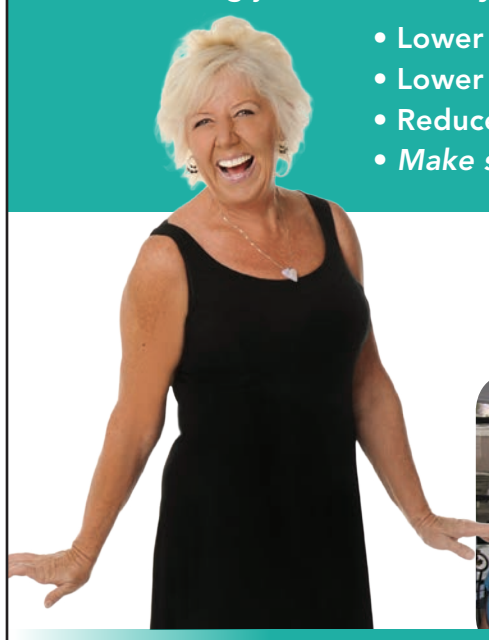

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Who is on the stone?

The following people are listed on the Rocky Hill World War I memorial: Charles Axel Abrahamson, Louis Bandero, Cadella Barrows, Charles E. Beaumont, Herbert W.L. Beaumont, Walter N. Belden, Nunzio Bennino, Walter E. Bittner, Robert Henry Sage Booth, Frederick C. Brown, George A. Brown, Frederick August Buckland, Antonio Campilio, Patsy Casullo, Ruth Chandler, Hebert H. Collins, Desiderio Cotto, Felix B. Croce, Louis Dandero, Bert Davis, Massinio Deberardino, Angelo DeJohn, Nicola DiGiovanni, Alfred Emil Ehrhardt Jr., Daniel Saul Epstein, George Epstein, Raymond Evans, Bernard J. Fagan, Angelo Nicolor Gammiero, Harold Edmund Geannette, Samuel Marshall Gilman, Florence Bell Grant, Leroy Charles Grant, Ralph L. Grant, George Curtis Green, Harold Gardner Green, Arthur Stewart Griswold, Hayden L. Griswold, Raymond Francis Hale, Francis X. Halligan, William Bernard Halligan, Dennis Joseph Hayes, Harry Roland Hick, Robert Milton Hick, William Thomas Hick, Charles Elwood Higgins, Horace Hubbard R. Hills, Clifford L. Holmes, Edward Edmund Holmes, William Holmes, Albert Asa Houck, Thomas J. Jordan, John Juliano, William Kelley, Paul Louis Klatt, William August Klatt, Margononi Martino, Frankly C. Matteson, John James McMahon, Agnes Beatrice Millerick, William James Millerick, Peter Mooradian, Gustave Muller, Sam Nazarro, Carl H.G. Neumann, Anthony John O'Brien, Ray Clark Palmer, Wallace Horatio Peck, John Wesley Prince, Joseph Pushkarz, William Francis Quinn, William Wallace Randall, Jeremiah M. Rapillo, Alexander Reducker, Elsie G. Rhodes, Frank N. Rhodes, Walter Robbins, Henry W. Scudder, Lawrence J. Shepard, Ralph C. Shepard, Charles Erskine Simmons Jr., Dominic Spatacino, Arthur Wells Spencer, Hebert Claud Spencer, Albert W. Sprague, Charles Francis Stanley, Sidney S. Templeman, James Ezra Tennyson Jr., Raymond Bertrand Thiesen, Albert Francis Warner, George Andrew Wilson, Clifford Ira Wright, George Amil Yeager and Joseph Matthew Zeiser.

Also listed on the memorial stone is Antonio Campilio, one of two veterans after whom American Legion Campilio-Holmes Post 123 is named. He lost his life in the battle of Chateau-Thierry.

Over the next year, Herron hopes to discover and compile as much information as possible about Rocky Hill during that war, the individual veterans, and the people and organizations who supported the war and became involved on the home front.

"I started researching who these people were and found out quite a bit."

–Bob Herron

Among the groups identified thus far are the American Red Cross, Motherhood Club and War Services Committee. He would like to find more information about these and other groups, as well as photos of local people from that time period that could be scanned and then returned to their owners.

The present-day memorial was dedicated July 4, 1925, and replaced an original Honor Roll Board that was dedicated in 1918. The names include those who served during the war as well as those who were drafted into the armed forces since.

"I've been sort of dabbling in historical research since I retired in 2003," Herron said. "I was doing research for the Godfrey [Memorial] Library and the Connecticut Historical Society."

The Godfrey facility is located in Middletown. Herron took on the Rocky Hill memorial project this past November. The scope changed along the way as he discovered

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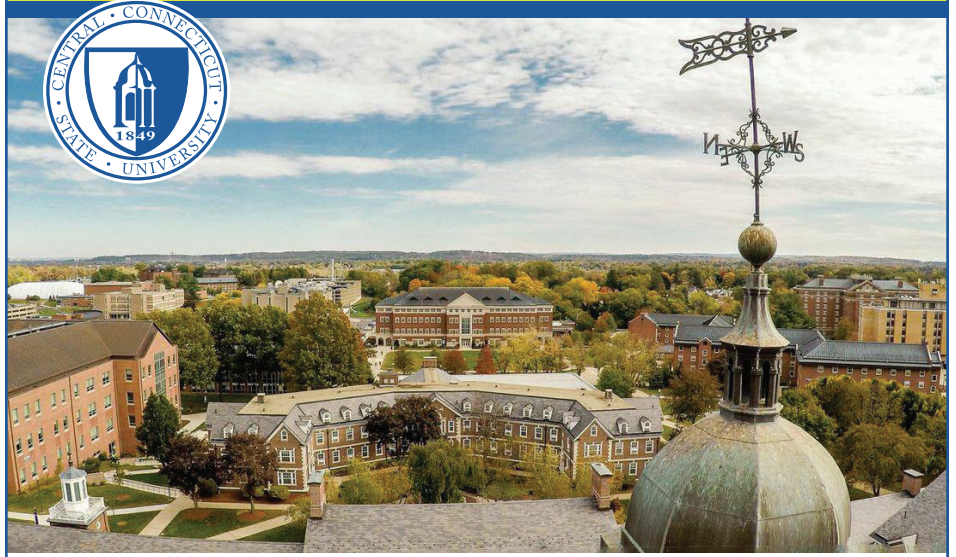

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Maureen Mullen of the Rocky Hill Historical Society and and Robert Herron look over some documents in the library archive of the historical aociety, located in Academy Hall.

Photo by Lisa Brisson

more and more information.

He is a U.S. Air Force veteran who served from 1961-1965. His duties as an airfield firefighter took him to such places as Okinawa, Thailand and Australia. His civilian job was as a computer methodologist.

According to Reference Librarian Lindsay Riordan, the original plan was to have students from Rocky Hill High School perform the research before the library turned to the historical society instead.

"That was kind of the start of it," she said.

"We're not sure whether this will be a link on a website or an actual publication. I started researching who these people were and found out quite a bit," Herron added.

"I basically put together a time line of Rocky Hill soldiers in the war. There are all sorts of interesting stories. We got ahold of discharge papers that were filed with the town clerk and there's probably a couple hundred of them."

He used online sources including familysearch.org and ancestry.com. Some of the people on the memorial were descendants of the town's founding fathers. Others were Italian immigrants who had recently arrived to work in the nearby quarries.

There was an emphasis on patriotism and a group called the "Four Minute Men" gave brief talks supporting the war effort at area movie houses. Those who opposed America's involvement in the war were criticized and their movements monitored by the government, he said.

Children were encouraged to attend a patriotic summer school to motivate them to support the war effort. Although not compulsory, one needed a good excuse not to attend this program.

Waterfront security procedures were enacted along the Connecticut River and special passes were required to access portions of the riverbank. While the stated intent was to keep an eye out for enemy spies who might arrive on those newfangled submarines, Herron said in reality this law was used to roust out drunks and ne'er-do-wells.

His focus was not just on the veterans, but on people who either lived or worked in town during that time period.

"This is everybody they knew of in 1925. I put together separate files on each one of these guys," Herron said. "I did a separate section on resident aliens. They were viewed with extreme suspicion."

Italian immigrants, in particular, were treated poorly, even though Italy and America were fighting on the same side. Herron hopes to speak with some of the descendants of these people who may live in the area.

He pointed out that at the same time the war was being fought the worldwide flu pandemic of 1918 was raging. According to the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, as many as 675,000 Americans died during that two-year pandemic, 13 times more than the number who perished on the battlefield.

Connecticut lost three times as many citizens to the pandemic as compared to the war.

"I thought I was done and then I wondered if any of these guys were Bonus Marchers," Herron said.

According to U.S.History.org, in 1924, Congress awarded each World War I veteran a certificate worth $1,000 in gratitude for their service. These certificates were eligible for redemption in 1945.

When the Great Depression hit and times became desperate, the veterans asked for early redemption of their certificates. The "Bonus Army" marched on Washington, D.C., in 1934 and blocked the steps to the U.S. Capitol.

President Herbert Hoover refused to meet with them. They built a shantytown across the Potomac River and waited for a decision.

The Senate rejected their request and those who stayed in Washington were falsely labeled a threat to national security and, in a highly controversial decision that backfired on Hoover, forcibly driven out by an Army regiment led by the soon to become famous Gen. Douglas MacArthur.

Riordan is delighted that Herron has developed such a passion and energy for this project.

"He's been having fun," she said with a smile. "He was here just about every day with new information."

Her ultimate goal for this project is to work in conjunction with the Connecticut State Library on a World War I website digital archive. A scanning day for items borrowed from the public will be held on a date to be determined in May or June.

Herron and Riordan said the emphasis now is on finding photographs of Rocky Hill people from that time period, especially the veterans. Some they have already located cannot be used because of copyright restrictions. **RHL**

Any resident who has memorabilia about World War I that they would like to share with this project may contact the library at 860-258-7623 or cora@rockyhillct.gov.

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From the mayor's desk

A look at progress of various kinds

by Mayor Cynthia Baio

Courtesy photo

The Stepney Seniors donated a bench for use outside the town hall/ community center complex.

I hope you all did well with the adjustment to Daylight Savings Time. While it is always tough to give up an hour of sleep, it is certainly nice to have an extra hour of daylight.

Here's a recap of some highlights from the last month.

A big shout out to the Stepney Seniors for their donation of a lovely bench to the town. It will be a nice resting place on the walking path or while people are waiting outside for a ride.

I had the pleasure of attending the dedication and ribbon cutting ceremony along with Councilman John Emmanuel, the senior liaison committee chairman, and Stepney Seniors President Rita Thibodeau, along with Parks and Recreation and senior staff.

I also had a chance to visit with the Rocky Hill Sea Cubs and watch this wonderful program in progress. The program, whose lead contact is Sebby Sorrentino, is a social pool program that pairs members of the RHHS swim team as buddies to students with special needs.

The day of my visit, the pool was full with fun and excitement, which I understand is the norm. Hats off to Sebby and RHHS swim coach Lisa Cooney for shepherding this great program.

The winter season has just closed out with a pizza party and now the Sidekicks, a spring soccer program similar to the Sea Cubs, will commence. Another exciting development to enhance our similar sports program is that the town is ready to move forward with Miracle Field.

As we move into spring, we are embarking on budget season. This year presents some challenges. In an effort to keep you informed, we will focus the next issue of the mayor's column on a budget update.

This month, however, we provide you with an update on Miracle Field. We are pleased that this is becoming a reality. The following is a report from Lisa Zerio, the director of parks and recreation.

Report on Miracle Field:

"In November 2014 we received funding for $800,000 from DEEP (Department of Energy and Environmental Protection). This has been a team effort with staff, Parks and Recreation Advisory Board, government operations, and has full support of the Town Council.

"We are pleased to report that we will be building an ADA fully compliant ball field and amenities that will also include a playground.

"We currently have 19 playing fields, which consist of football, soccer, lacrosse, softball and baseball, none of which are designated just for children/ adults with special needs. This field will allow those with special needs to be able to play in a safe, fun environment.

"As you know, natural turf is subject to issues with the amount of play and weather. Synthetic surfaces are ideal for children with disabilities who may be wheelchair bound or even have limited mobility.

"Elm Ridge is a perfect site, as we view Elm Ridge as our premier park, and has all the amenities for the entire family. We will be breaking ground very soon and should have the park at almost substantial completion by the end of June." **RHL**

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Slice of LIFE

photos by Mark Jahne

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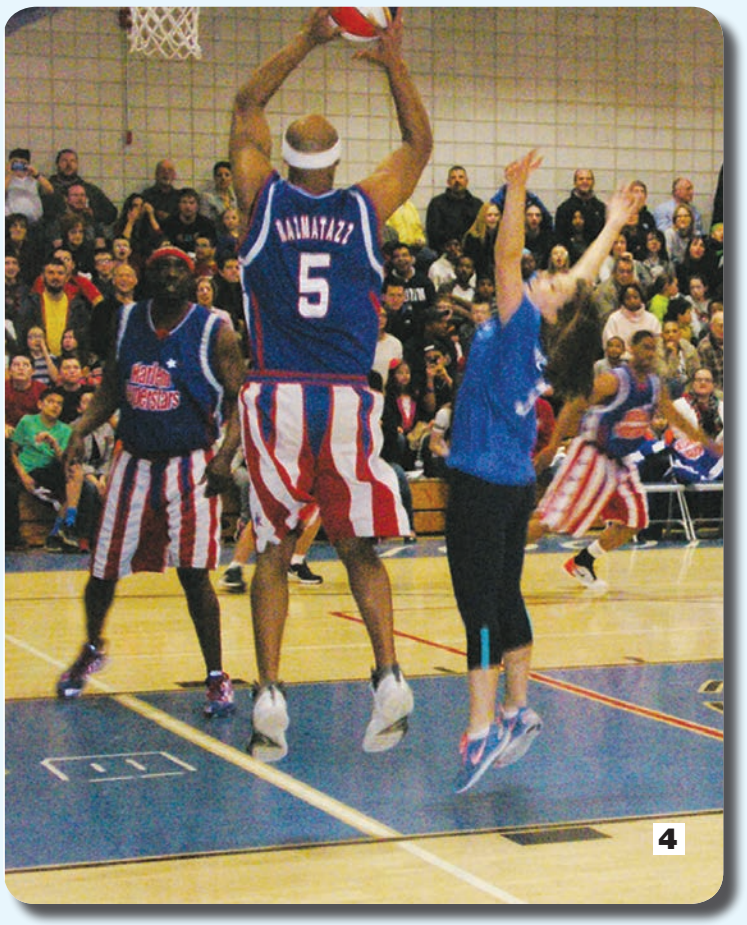

4

Hooping it up for RHEF

A standing-room-only crowd filed into the Rocky Hill High School gymnasium March 5 to enjoy a benefit basketball game featuring the Harlem Superstars. The talented and comedic touring squad was opposed by the Rocky Hill Dream Team consisting of local educators and other school-related personnel. Proceeds went to support the Rocky Hill Education Foundation. 1. Rocky Hill Education Foundation volunteers Sue Creedon, left, and Julia Eisenhaur sold basketballs and other souvenirs to help raise money for the cause. 2. At 7 feet, Kevin "Tiny" Briggs was the tallest player on the floor. He showcased his skill in sinking half-court shots from a sitting position, 3. Teachers, principals and other members of the Rocky Hill Dream Team get ready to take the floor. 4. The Superstars had a distinct height advantage over the hometown squad. 5. Harlem Superstars announcer Alex Macphail and Superintendent of Schools Mark Zito get ready for the game to begin. 6. Former mayor Henry Vasel, left, and Town Councilor John Emmanuel served as referees. 7. The Superstars got tired of playing basketball, so they decided to give football a try. 8. Kevin "Showboat" Jackson signs autographs after the game. 9. The Harlem Superstars believe in bringing high-quality basketball, fund-raising opportunities, education and family fun wherever they travel.

Your thoughts

This month we asked local residents: "What do you like most about winter?"
Here are some of their answers.

"I don't really like it much, except the first snowfall is very pretty."
– Barbara Ortner

"That's when I get in the mood to cook beef stew and soups."
– Marie Ritchie

"I like the holidays. It's a great time to get together with your family."
– Elaine Kingsland

"I'm an optimist. I look forward, because it means spring's going to come."
– Gladys Kitchens

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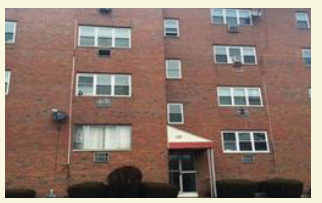

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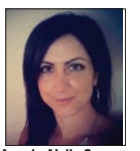

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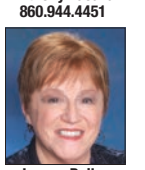

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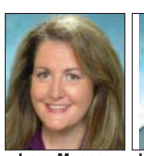

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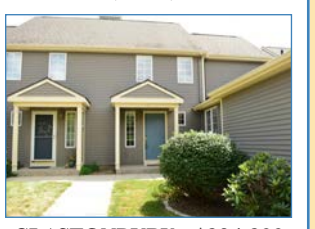

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David Sorgenti said he wants people to experience something a little different at OC Kitchen-Bar.

A taste of Italy

OC Kitchen-Bar adds to the cuisine along Main Street and the Silas Deane

by Mara Dresner
Staff Writer

Step into OC Kitchen-Bar and one might be forgiven for forgetting it used to be a transmission shop. The restaurant brings a distinctly Italian flare to the redeveloped space.

The restaurant is the brainchild of Lorenzo DiClemente, who owns Oggi salons and is a long-time restaurateur whose restaurants include the former Tango in Glastonbury.

DiClemente brought in David Sorgenti, who has worked with Geno Auriemma's restaurant group, including opening his Southington and Storrs locations.

"We met by fluke through a mutual friend. I knew Lorenzo was opening a restaurant. I didn't really want to do anything more with restaurants. I met with Lorenzo and within five minutes, he said, 'You're the guy for me, but you've got to stay,'" said Sorgenti.

His usual process is to open a restaurant and be on to his next project.

"He's a wonderful, wonderful guy. You see it right off. He has a lot of energy. He kind of gets you in there."

The restaurant, built in a former automotive shop on Main Street, took some imagination to envision.

"These were actually bay doors where the cars would drive in. It was just an empty space," Sorgenti said. "Lorenzo saw a wonderful opportunity. Things work differently for him."

The original concept for the restaurant was a risotteria. The menu was designed by Andréa Mainardi.

"He's a young celebrity chef in Italy. They call him 'the atomic

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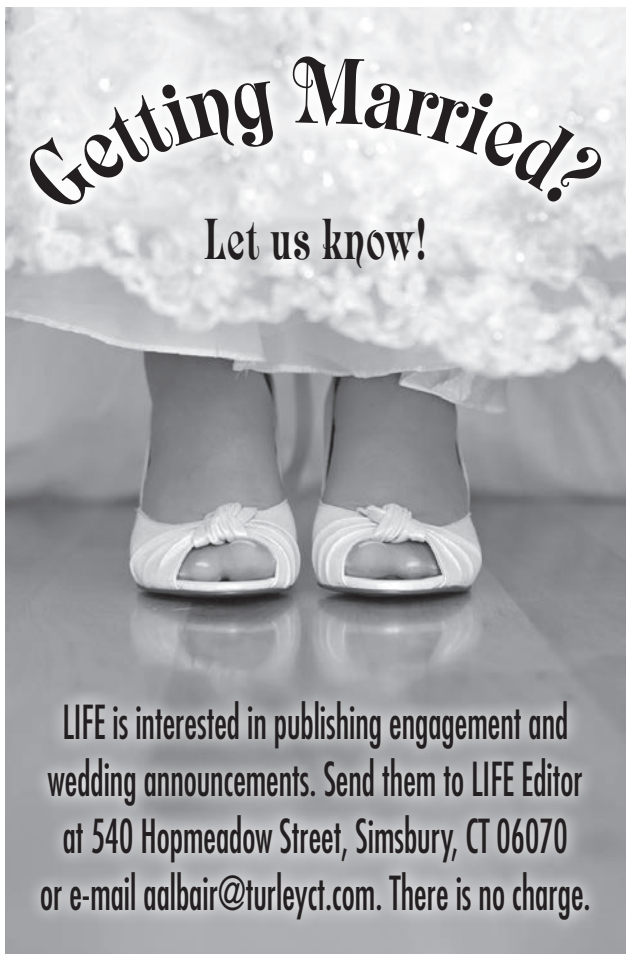
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"We want to change people's opinion of Italian food. So we started out with just risotto, about 15 versions."

–David Sorgenti

blonde.' He's on a few cooking shows in Italy. He's a handsome, very vibrant guy who came down and helped [develop] the menu," Sorgenti said.

The restaurant continues to bring in chefs from Italy.

"He'll send us new guys all the time. They have a good time. They come, they hang out, they'll cook for a little while. They love it," he said.

"It's something cool in Italy to say, 'I cooked for a restaurant in America.' It's a very cool bragging point for the young fellows."

The restaurant's opening this past September was delayed several times due to Mainardi's schedule and other issues. The original concept for the menu was also expanded.

"We started out as risotteria; we wanted to do risotto and nothing else. In Italy, when you go out to a restaurant, you never order pasta – you eat it at your house all the time," Sorgenti said.

"We want to change people's opinion of Italian food. So we started out with just risotto, about 15 versions. Then we also have brick oven pizza, and after people got used to thinking it's OK to go out for risotto, we introduced two kinds of pasta."

The menu, while still small, now features a more extensive selection.

Sorgenti said his favorite entrée is guance di maiale al vino rosso, or pork cheek.

"It's delicious. It's slow cooked and absolutely out of the world," he said.

He often recommends it to patrons.

"I don't tell them what it is at first. I just say it's a pork dish," he admitted with a chuckle.

If he's enjoying a risotto, he'll likely choose the scamorza affumicata fichi e crudo, which had smoked cheese, figs and prosciutto crudo. The restaurant is open only for dinner.

"Part of the reason is that at night, this place really comes alive," Sorgenti said, showing off the lighting in various colors.

The décor is meant to evoke a feeling of Italy.

"We want people to walk in and say, 'Wow, look at the ceiling,'" he said. "We wanted something different everywhere they look."

Local artist Chris Gann, an instructor at the Rhode Island School of Design, did much of the work, including designing an outside wall that is reminiscent of the Fountain of 99 Spouts in L'Aquila, Abruzzo, Italy.

"Lorenzo is from Abruzzo. We wanted a little look outside to remind him of where he is from," Sorgenti said.

There is also a throwback to the space's earlier days as an automotive garage.

"Oficina means workshop or garage; cucina means kitchen. Literally, we are in a garage that also has a kitchen," he said.

Large toolboxes are used to hold silverware and napkins, a nod to the building's history. They enclosed their patio space, which about doubles the restaurant's seating. OC Kitchen-Bar also features a unique seating option, a community table that seats 17.

"In the beginning, no one would sit there. You sit next to other people and share your space with someone. It's almost forced interaction with strangers," Sorgenti said.

"Now the first thing people go for is the community table. They comment on each other's food and wine. It's a wonderful experience. It's like what you experience when you go out in Italy. It's just one more element that makes us different."

The restaurant also does private parties and can handle about 100 people. It accepts reservations for parties of six or more. While the main kitchen is open until around 10 p.m., Sorgenti noted they make pizza later.

"We're here until 1 o'clock in the morning; we'll make you a pie," he said.

The restaurant has already been attracting many repeat visitors, such as Luke DiMaria, owner of Brooklawn Funeral Home and a resident for more than 25 years.

"Being Italian, I think I know a little something about Italian food," he said.

Photos by Mara Dresner

Silverware at OC Kitchen-Bar is kept in large toolboxes, a nod to the space's automotive past.

"I remember when it was a transmission place. What they've created with that space is great for the town and the community. It's very authentic Italian. I like the fact the chefs are from Italy."

DiMaria is impressed with the restaurant on multiple levels.

"The whole ambiance, it's a great vibe. Not to mention that the food is very authentic Italian. The service, the ambiance and the food, all three make for a great experience," he said.

Sorgenti is impressed with Rocky Hill.

"It's a beautiful town," he said. "[From] the people who live in the town, you can tell the quality of the place. They're very genuine. They're very sweet people. It's refreshing."

The restaurant has a specific goal.

"We try to do something different from what people are used to, from what your eyes see to what you taste, even to the wine," he said.

"We like to get people a little out of their comfort zone. We don't want it to be too traditional. We want people to experience something a little different." **RHL**

OC Kitchen-Bar is located at 2399 Main St. Call 860-785-8433. The kitchen is open Sunday through Thursday from 4:30-10 p.m. and Friday and Saturday from 4:30-11 p.m.

Photos by Allie Rivera

Building the Buddy Bench

Girl Scout troop creates inclusive bench at Stevens School

On the back of the new Buddy Bench, Girl Scouts left their own mark with their names and painted thumbprints.

by Allie Rivera
Staff Writer

The entryway to Stevens School has a new bench to sit on, but this colorful structure isn't any ordinary seat.

"It's so everyone can feel included," 10-year-old Emily Killoran said. "If you need a friend, you can sit on it and someone will come sit with you."

Emily is a junior girl scout with Rocky Hill Girl Scout Troop 10245, a collection of fifth-graders who have been in scouting together since kindergarten. This project was their latest in a long list of service endeavors.

The Buddy Bench is an international project started by an elementary school boy named Christian in York, Pennsylvania. Wanting to foster a sense of community on his playground, Christian came up with the idea for the Buddy Bench.

A student who wanted someone to play with or talk with could sit on the bench, and when others saw him or her there, they would approach that student and either talk with them or ask them to play. After the creation at his school, word of the project began to spread, and now there are Buddy Benches at schools in all 50 states as well as throughout Canada.

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Last year, members of the Girl Scout troop at Stevens School heard about the initiative and immediately were interested in bringing their own Buddy Bench to town.

"When we sell cookies and all that, we sit down with the girls and figure out what we want to do with what we've earned," co-troop leader Nicole Crawford said. "This year we focused on community projects, and when they heard about the Buddy Bench, they all wanted to do it."

The idea to install a Buddy Bench at the school came about almost a year ago, but the girls had to raise money to build the bench first. With the aid of their troop leaders and parents, members helped to decorate the wooden bench using the colors of the Girls Scouts, blue for Daisies and Cadets, Brown for Brownies and green for Juniors.

Troop members hoped to add their own personal touch to the bench as well by adding their names on the back and creating painted vines across the seat using their thumbprints as leaves.

"We're hoping that since we're leaving next year, this will stay so it's like we're leaving a piece of us here," Anna Leal, 10, said.

The bench was placed in the hallway for use on the last day of February and the girls said they have already seen people using it.

"How could you say no? It plays into the whole positive climate that we're creating here."

–Principal Jason Maziarz

The first person to test it out was Principal Jason Maziarz, who was thrilled when the students approached him with the idea.

"They told me that the kids wanted to donate something to the school that's meaningful and they explained the concept to me," Maziarz said. "How could you say no? It plays into the whole positive climate that we're creating here."

The bench is the latest in a long list of service projects the troop has completed over the years, including donating blankets to the Connecticut Humane Society, a pajama and book drive for children in foster care, a toy drive for children at the Connecticut Children's Medical Center and making sandwiches for the Hartford Loaves and Fishes soup kitchen, among others.

"I do Girl Scouts because I enjoy helping out my community," Emily Massicotte, 10, said.

In addition to feeling as though what they do makes a difference, many of the girls said that scouting helped them to create friendships they otherwise would not have made.

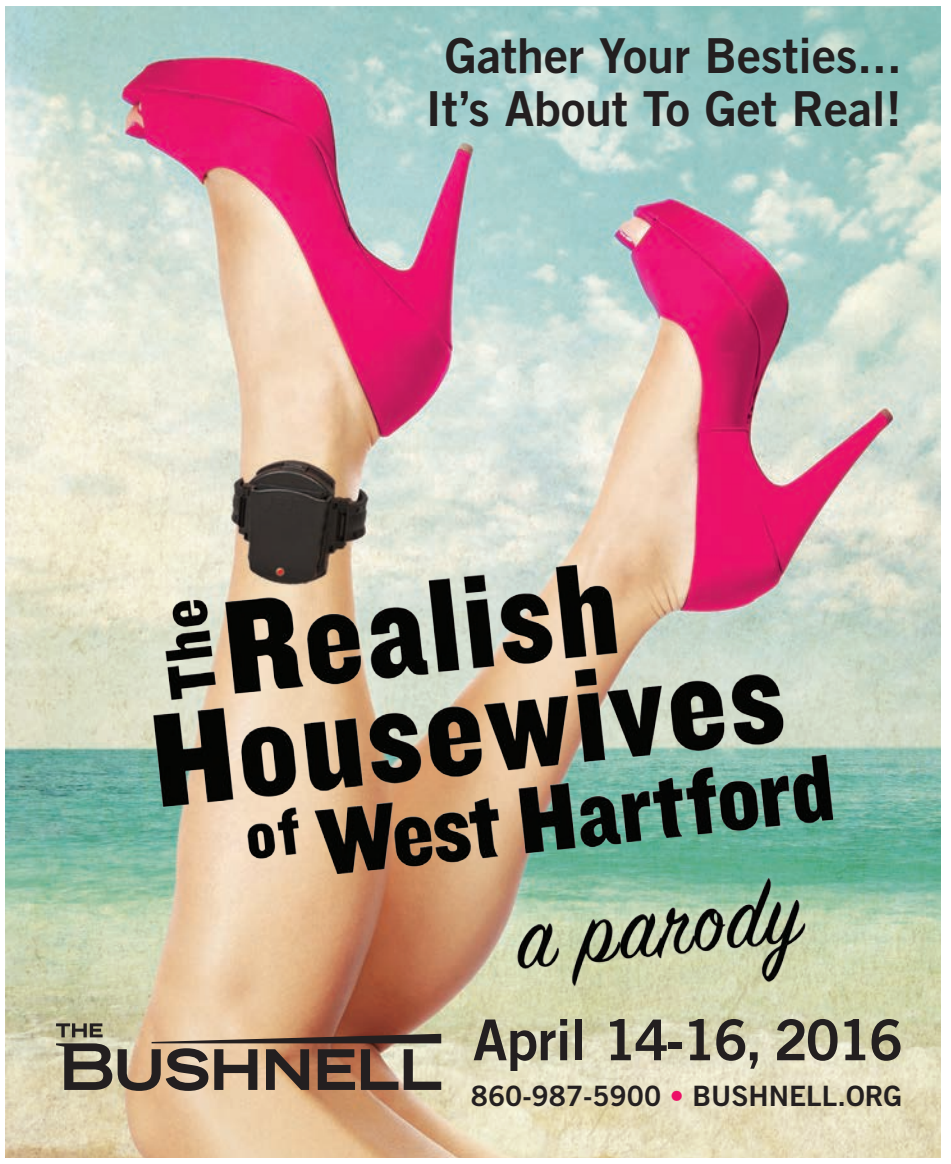
"If I didn't go to Girl Scouts, I wouldn't even know some of my friends," 10-year-old Ella Cristalli said.

That sense of friendship and the value they put on it was a driving force behind the creation of the bench.

"We don't want people to feel excluded," Olivia Crawford, 11, said.

Looking forward, the girls hope to install a second bench outside that could be used during recess as another opportunity for children to feel included. Until then, the Buddy Bench will remain prominently featured in the entryway.

"I'm proud of them. What an amazing group of girls," Maziarz said. "I think this is another example of the culture here. Kids are willing to do something to give back to the school." **RHL**



PETS

Dog trainer Ben Garson of Dogology in Canton said that training your dog "results in having a deeper relationship with them."

Sit! Stay! Socialize!

Learning how to improve your pet's behavior

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

When it comes to training a dog, it is the human who needs the lessons.

When a dog is properly trained and socialized it can benefit not only the pet, but the owner's and animal's health, too.

"If you want a dog to respect you, you need to learn their language and communicate with them," Ben Garson, dog trainer at Dogology in Canton, said.

He and his staff of trainers are training dogs one human a time.

"I love dogs, and I love working with them, but a lot of what I do is working with people," he said of his business that offers group and individual training sessions at the shop or at home.

A common thing Garson runs into with pet owners is the idea that they know what they are doing in terms of training their dog because they had other dogs before.

"They think, I've had dogs all my life, you feed it, you take it for a walk," Garson said. "Sometimes the most dangerous things are things we don't know or assume we know. Really investigating and educating yourself on how to communicate with them is huge."

Garson said common mistakes people make when training their dog is to be too forceful and using a louder voice than is necessary. Things such as the way a person stands, moves or the energy in which a dog owner corrects their pet all impact whether a dog will be successfully trained.

Garson said the best way to make training a success is to connect with their dog the way they connect with other dogs, with body language being a huge component.

"Those things come more natural to a dog," he said.

When the once adorable puppy grows into an older, less active senior dog, the pet's behavior may change as they develop age-related issues, such as joint pain or illness.

Garson said that older dogs have developed a pattern of behavior that they stick with, much the way a person does. He likened it to a person flipping a switch to turn on a light even though the power is out; the behavior has become a habit.

One of the things that pet owners should keep in mind when working with an older dog is that changing their behavior can be stressful for the pet, and the dog should not feel

Looking to adopt? Here is a list of area rescues

Boot n' Kit Canine Rescue,
Farmington Valley
Bnkrescue.com
(Dogs only)

Dog Star Rescue,
Farmington Valley
Dogstarrescue.org
Facebook.com/dogstar
(Dogs only)

Mary's Kitty Korner,
Granby
860-379-4141
maryskittykorner.org
(Cats only)

Animal Friends of Connecticut,
West Hartford
860-827-0381
afocinc.org
(Dogs and Cats)

West Hartford Animal Control
860-570-8818

Connecticut Humane Society
701 Russell Rd.
Newington, CT
800-452-0114
cthumane.org
(Variety of animals)

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PETS

pressured, that is why it might take more time to retrain a dog than to start fresh with a puppy.

"It's not impossible," Garson assured.

What older dogs need is a person they can trust and respect and who will gently lead them into proper behavior.

"A lot of people confuse freedom with happiness, they think a dog who has no structure, no boundaries or rules is a happy dog," Garson said. "But, really, nowhere in life does that exist, kids raised without structure and boundaries tend to be miserable adults."

This is true for dogs as well.

"Socialization is one of the most crucial parts of raising any dog," Christian Suter, owner of Candlewyck Kennels in Glastonbury said. "It's something owners should really make a point to work on. If you are having trouble with it, seek someone out."

Suter defined socialization as "being socialized with everything in their environment, this means cars, trains, trucks, all sorts of people, sounds, different smells, other dogs, anything they can encounter in its environment."

Suter said socializing a puppy should begin immediately when a puppy comes home to its new family, usually around 8 weeks old.

To do so simply means introducing the puppy to anything in and around the house, including people and other pets.

"What you want to do is, if the puppy shows any fearfulness or uncertainty, you encourage it to overcome that," Suter said.

While starting immediately with a puppy is ideal, older dogs can also be socialized to feel better in their environment.

"You don't want to overwhelm the older dog. If it's fearful of something – other dogs, running cars, you want to help that dog and encourage this dog to be more confident in that situation. When older dogs fear something, they often had a negative experience in the past," Suter said.

Candlewyck Kennels offers doggy day care, which, Suter said, can be an excellent way to help socialize dogs. Puppies are put in a separate area where they are first introduced to other young dogs about the same size.

"I think it's important for an owner to understand how a dog learns," Suter said. "If you understand that, it helps you tremendously in socializing and getting to know your dog and working with your dog."

"I am a big proponent of socialization and training," Dr. Monica Dijanic, medical director at Beaver Brook Animal Hospital in Wethersfield, said.

She has heard statistics ranging from 30 to 65 percent of dogs are surrendered to shelters because of behavioral issues. It does not have to be this way.

For starters, training your pet, Dijanic said, helps to establish a human-animal bond and it prevents the pet owner from becoming frustrated. It also helps keep pets healthy.

"If you have an untrained dog that eats your Thanksgiving turkey, you will not only have an upset family but foreign body issues, GI upset; There are health ramifications," Dijanic said. Additionally, if a dog is trained to come at their name it can keep them safe if they should get out of the house or off leash.

"The big one people talk about is the human-animal bond you will be bonding with a much more well-behaved dog or cat," Dijanic said. Issues such as a cat urinating outside of its litter box or a dog that constantly jumps on people can be prevented with proper training.

Dijanic recommends pet owners sign up for dog training classes.

"I've been in the veterinarian field for over 25 years," she said. "When I get a new dog I do training classes. It's a nice refresher and bonding time, something you and your pet can do together."

Classes, even for those who have attended before, help to introduce new techniques that may be unfamiliar to pet owners. **RHL**

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News roundup

Honored by Big Brothers

In commemoration of its 50th anniversary in Connecticut, Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters presented a Corporate Champion recognition plaque to Stewart Staffing Solutions for its ongoing commitment to helping children in need reach their full potential.

The plaque was accepted by Rocky Hill resident Julie Haas, managing partner at Stewart Staffing Solutions. Making the presentation is Andrew Fleischmann, president and CEO of Nutmeg Big Brothers Big Sisters.

Top scholar-athletes honored

Two Rocky Hill High School students will be honored May 1 by the Connecticut Association of Schools for their combined athletic and academic excellence. Jessica Greenspan and David Katz were selected as CIAC Scholar Athletes for the 2015-2016 school year.

Train your dog

The town Department of Parks and Recreations is offering dog training classes starting May 2. Beginner Manners/Basic Skills will be held from 6-6:50 p.m. and the Tricks class runs from 7-7:50 p.m.

These classes are for dogs age 5 months and older and are not appropriate for dogs that aggressively react to other dogs. The cost is $100 for six classes.

They will be taught by Laura DeMaio Roy, certified guide dog and trick dog trainer. Sign up on the Parks and Recreation website rockyhillct.gov/parkrec.

Bus heading for Boston

The town Parks & Recreation Department is sponsoring a "Boston On Your Own" bus trip Saturday, May 7. The bus will depart at 8 a.m. from the community center.

Passengers will arrive at Quincy Market at approximately 10:30 a.m. The cost is $40, including driver gratuity, and reservations are due by April 15. To reserve a seat go to http://registrations.rhparkrec.org.info/activities/programs.

Guerrera runs again

State Rep. Antonio "Tony" Guerrera, who represents Rocky Hill and portions of Newington and Wethersfield, will seek a ninth term in the 29th Assembly District this fall. The veteran Democrat is chairman of the House Transportation Committee.

Stewart Staffing honored

He was elected mayor of Rocky Hill in 1999 and won his first legislative race in 2001. Guerrera said he plans to protect state revenues earmarked for rebuilding roads, rail lines and bridges, as well as modernizing air and port facilities.

Art on display

In celebration of Youth Art Month, Rocky Hill High School and Griswold Middle School are presenting an exhibit of student artwork at the Cora J. Belden Library through April 7. This showcase of artwork includes a wide range of media including drawing, watercolor, ceramics, photography, digitally created artworks and more.

The general public is invited to view the student art at any time during the library's normal hours of operation. **RHL**

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Honored for their academic prowess

The following students were named to the second quarter honor roll at Rocky Hill High School, according to a list provided by the school.

Grade 12

High Honors

Haley Albano, Mitchell Aureli, Abigale Barnes, Alexander Bondi, Peter Botticello, Nicole Bruzik, Mathew Callahan, Alexa Cannistraro, Alexa Cardillo, Gabriella Caron, Brooke Chao, Jovan Colon, William Crafa, Rachel D'Agostino, Kyle Devine, Joshua Evardone, Sara Federici, Rebecca Ford, Nathan Friday, Arianna Genovese, Sarah Gioia, Jessica Greenspan, Justin Hewitt, David Katz, Arkid Koni, Jonas Kuttikattu, Briana Lamari, Olivia Levine, Giuseppe Mattia, Frank McGee, Almedina Mirica, Jeffrey Moise, Matthew Caesar, Matthew Molloy, Geycel Muniz, Ayobamii Oseni, Madison Palmer, Emily Pentland, Brandon Phenix, Sierra Pizzoferrato, Suela Resuli, Jenna Sanzo, Antonina Scata, Alison Simboski, Julianne Slavin, Eric Slowik, Victoria Spellman, Jared Sullivan, Steven Tomastik, Lindsay Varney, Victoria Veneziano, Trevor Whalen and Emily Zebrowski.

Grade 11

High Honors

Vanessa Cardillo, Vincent Cassarino, Jay Chandran, Alicia Dabek, Justin Donofrio, Shannon Duffy, Zykeya Ford, Anthony Fortes, Michelino Gali, Melissa Gamonal, Allison Grover, Erin Kelly, Emily Louro, Peter Lucente, JoDee Lupacchino, Julia Machaj, Kristina Machaj, Robert Machaj, Tatyana Martinez, Ricky Montalvo, Bailey O'Connell, Austin Pavelec, Amanda Place, Amber Rehman, Sarina Santos, David Scalise, Nicole Shank, Alexander Sikorski, Michael Simons, Montserrat Sousa-Sanchez, Brianna St. Georges, Caroline Sullivan, Jason Vailionis, Gabriel Walerysiak and Joseph Young.

Grade 10

High Honors

Sydney Aberbach, Marisa Anderson, Alexander Benson, Brendan Boyle, Emma Brownstein, Christian Castanho, Nicole Chamberland, Shelby Cios, Kristen Costello, Andrew DiMatteo, Matthew Emmanuel, Sarah Erkson, Christian Federici, Alexandra Fishberg, Cole Fishberg, Grace Fisher, Jared Friday, Gino Giansanti, Arian Gokhale, Elena Goodman, Katrina Granovskiy, Michael Griswold, Zirui Hao, Melanie Holmes, Madison Hussey, Sana Kasmani, Sophie Kurdziel, Grace Lang, Andrew Levine, Rachel Longo, Jonathan Lu, Kevin Moise, Christiana Montalbano, Grace Moore, Madelyn Morse, Sujith Nakkala, Nathaniel Nicholson, Matthew Osgood, Colin Pavel, Brigid Schulenburg, Reva Shah, Brian Speers, Samantha Steinman, Katherine Stockman, Kayla Sullivan, Alexa Wilson, John Woolley, Emily Zarrilli, Wiktoria Zduniak and Scott Zebrowski.

Grade 9

High Honors

Pavan Adapa, Anthony Albano, Colin Amo, Tomasz Baliga, Gulnaz Bhura, Jordyn Bowler, Kaitlyn Brouillard, Gabriela Brown, Adam Buerk, Thien-Kim Bui, Meagan Caesar, Daniella Castanho, Sharanya Chandu, Adam Chao, Alisha Chhabra, Daniel Cho, Andre Costa, Megan Creevy, Morgan DeCarlo, Connor Devanney, Lilah Devine, Julia DiBattista, Victoria DiLoreto, Nesla Disha, Katarzyna Drozdzal, Shae Duffy, Jessica Eisenhaur, Morgan Felice, Ryan Figueiredo, Michelle Galdamez, Elliot Gamelin, Mihir Gowda, Leah Graf, Lea Grant, Alexandra Gwara, Melissa Hiller, Andre Johnson, Brett Kiesel, Maya Kugel, Pranjali Kulkarni, Benjamin Lukens, Nicole Lukens, Marissa Martin, Kate Masciadrelli, Taylor McLean, Emma Molloy, Alyssa Morabito, Pulkit Nagpal, Julia O'Connor, Yamini Pant, Alexandra Parks, Prem Patel, Lauren Pattison, Haley Pavelec, Molly Pawlak, Logan Prentiss, Angelika Ptak, Anna Riedinger, Julia Rosa, Nijaz Salihovic, Amanda Schuman, Ayla Schumann, Sarah Simard, Jordan Swanson, Karalina Valente, Venanzio Weeks, Anne White and Kellie Williams.

Grade 12

Academic Honors

Rubeena Abraham, Matthew Bortolan, Rachel Calabrese, Alexander Castanho, Jenna Chipkin, Elizabeth Coler, Patricia Czarnecki, Jenna D'Angelo, Laurina D'Appollonio, Hope Dinkins, Ashley Duarte, Alexis Emmanuel, Sara Golemi, Morgan Guerra, Marquise Hardwick, Kevin Hasson, Daniel Janikowski, Emma Jennings, Scott Kennedy, Michael LaPorte, Kevin Larkin, Ryan Lombardo, Britany Moore, Leon Novak, Caitlin Perkins, Christopher Pratt, Kelly Quirion, Jerry Reyes, Alexys Rinaldi, Megan Ritchie, Brooke Robinson, Nicholas Santos, Julia Sevigny, Glenn Simons, Madison Stabile, Julianne Tefoe, Olympia Thompson, Wilnely Urena, Matthew Valente, Kassandra Veneziano and Summer Vinci.

Grade 11

Academic Honors

Allison Allegretti, Kristopher Begen, Brian Blakeslee, Taylor Bowler, Samantha Brady, Christina Braun, Nam Bui, Dante Carlone, Nicholas Casiano, Mark Catania, Patrick Cella, Cameron Cheyney, Kathleen Conlan, Timothy Davis, Urja Desai, Luke Devine, Kaitlin Dillon, Daria DiMatteo, Ben Famiglietti, Ryan Fraleigh, Jacob Franzen, Nicolas Garry-Benco, Evan Gauvin, Joseph Goodrich, Jordan Greco, Andrew Guyette, Christopher Hansen, Hunter Held, Justin Hock, Erin Hourihan, Nico Karabetsos, Dario Kokic, Fotos Kroji, Cristina LoGiudice, Salvatore Madera, Despina Merriman, Amanda Mitchell, Joseph Monaco, Selena Moore, Arianna Morabito, Analysia Ortiz, Prarthana Patel, Anthony Pietrandrea, James Pitchell, Ariana Ramos, Frankie Roberts, Kyle Rosenberg, Alana Rychlec, Kajal Shah, Renato Silva, Ethan Simard, Germain St. Germain, Joseph Sullivan, Katherine Sullivan, Daniel Tonna, Jake Walling, Emily Whelan, Christopher Witowski and Lukasz Zduniak.

Grade 10

Academic Honors

Dante Baker, Andrew Barber, Victoria Bower, Ashley Cannata, Daniel Cavallaro, Adan Cecunjanin, Dillon Cerpa, Stephen DeNardo, Thomas DiMatteo, Haley Doll, Michelle Dougherty, Julia Fazzina, Torah Ferrebee, Gina Genovese, Daniel Goslin, Anna Grant, Eesha Irfan, Matthew Lanciotto, Marc LaPuma, Megan Mahoney, Ioannis Mastorakis, Adelina Miceli, Tyler Morgan, Eesha Nasir, Sonalia Neemcharan, Bree O'Conno, Jason Oostendor, Kruti Pate, Henry Patterso, Brianna Plac, Szymon Pta, Melissa Rambharose, Ryan Robinso, Samantha Rogal, Rachel Roncaiol, Siena Ruglio, Seyed-Arash Safav, Madison Sant, Riley Shannaha, Russell Sheathel, Dion Sherma, Sabrina Sokaiti, Abigail Stock, Benjamin Stock, Thalia Taffe, Jonathan Tefoe, Joseph Twigg, Seth Walerysiak, Dylan Walsh, Jacob Weber and William White.

Grade 9

Academic Honors

Hailey Anderson, Aviana Baho, Muhammed Bilal, Daniel Calafiore, Rachel Calcagni, Anel Cecunjanin, Arijan Cekic, Chloe Colandrea, Christopher Conlan, Victoria Czubat, Viviana Delgado, Gianna DiMatteo, Felicity Frate, Nathan Gariepy, Nathan Gerace-Hicks, Romeo Gjuzi, Olena Herasym, Charles Hilton, James Huddleston, Yesmine Jlidi, Hunter Layton, Alexandra Lopez, Miguel Madera, Francis Malabanan, Emily McInnish, Marina Merriman, Sarah Mitchell, Alexa Morin, Patrick Ostrowski, Ayush Patel, Aaron Pavelec, Griffin Pickett, Deanna Prescott, Jaharra Roberts, Robert Rosa, Ashley Scacca, Lillian Spada, Brenna Sweeney, Liliana Trujillo, Sophie Twigg, Christian Uccello and Isabella Vassallo. RHL

rocky hill LIFE

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Editorial

Enough with the name-calling

We remain embroiled in the midst of a presidential election campaign that feels like it started a decade ago. Primaries and caucuses are being held all over the country as the political parties try to whittle down the field to their final candidates.

Recent campaign events, particularly those involving the Donald Trump campaign, have become rowdy. Protesters are becoming more forceful and supporters and security are tossing them out. There have been physical altercations and strong words thrown both ways.

The fact that some of the other candidates are speaking out about how all of the name calling and emotion that is part and parcel of modern American politics needs to be tempered is good. But, they must have been asleep for the past two or three decades.

Such obnoxious behavior is nothing new. Television and radio personalities pander to it every day. As much as the media and the candidates claim that they want to talk about the issues, the truth is that they just love to stir the pot and encourage people to react with their emotions rather than with their intellect.

That is a disservice to everyone. It creates a powerful us against them mentality and demonizes the other side of the debate. It creates closed minds and stubborn resistance to listening to any ideas other than our own.

The United States of America is supposed to be the worldwide model of free speech. But there is little respect for that portion of the First Amendment to the Constitution, at least when it comes to politics.

To our readers who harbor strong liberal political ideals – conservatives are not fascists. They are fellow citizens who have a different political philosophy and opinion.

To our readers who harbor strong conservative political ideals – liberals are not communists. They are fellow citizens who have a different political philosophy and opinion.

There is nothing wrong with being passionate about our political beliefs, but that passion needs to have a limit. Otherwise there is no hope for civil discourse and such discourse is a key ingredient of democracy.

When Liberal Party candidate Justin Trudeau was elected prime minister of Canada this past October, he asked his followers to tone down the rhetoric against their Conservative opponents. He reminded them that they are all citizens of the same country and should treat each other as neighbors, not as enemies. Can you imagine any of the current U.S. presidential candidates making such a comment after he or she wins the presidency in November? That person would likely be excoriated by his or her party.

It's all about winning and forcing one's agenda down the throats of the losers. That's a shame. We can, and should, be better than that. **RHL**

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Snap a photo around town, share it on Instagram, and you might see it in these pages.

April calendar

Su	Mo	Tu	We	Th	Fr	Sa
					1	2
3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10	11	12	13	14	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30

4 AARP Tax Help, 10 a.m.-4 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 11

SCORE Business Counseling, 12:30-4:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

5 Career Coaching, 10 a.m. to noon, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Toddler Time, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 12, 19 and 26

Knitting Group, 11 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 12, 19 and 26

Keep Your Computer Secure, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

6 Books & Babies, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 13, 20 and 27

Playgroup Plus, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 13, 20 and 27

Preschool Math Club, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 13, 20 and 27

Crazy 8's Math Club, 4:15 p.m., for grades K-2, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 13, 20 and 27

Mystery Book Discussion, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 13, 20 and 27

7 Funs for Ones, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 14, 21 and 28

ESL Classes, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 14, 21 and 28

Crafter School, 4:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 14 and 28

Family Make It, Take It, 6 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 14 and 28

8 Mini Machines, 4 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 29

9 Library Spring 5K Race/Walk, 9 a.m., Griswold Middle School, 860-258-7621 or cora@rockyhillct.gov

Magnificent Multiples, 10:15 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 2 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

11 Computer Explorers, 4 p.m., for grades K-2, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 18 and 25

Family Story Time, 6:15 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also April 25

12 Setting Up & Using Email, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Poetry Reading, 5:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

13 Alzheimer's or Dementia Caregivers Support Group, 6 p.m., The Atrium at Rocky Hill, 1160 Elm St., 860-563-5588 or ehall@benchmarkquality.com

Learn 3D Design Crash Course, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Friends of the Library, 7 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

15 LEGO Free Play, 10:30 a.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

16 Board Game Club, noon, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Rainbow Magic Book Club, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

18 Library Board of Trustees, 7 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

19 Getting Started with iPad, 2 p.m., registration required, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Read With Toby the certified therapy dog, 4 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Acoustic Delta Blues with the Coffee Grinders, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

20 Cocoa & Crafts, 6 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

23 Friends Book Sale, 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info, also noon to 3 p.m. April 24

24 Support Dennis Clair, 1-5 p.m., Chicago Sam's, 51 Shunpike Road, Cromwell, 860-690-3444

26 Save Money With Open Source Software, 2 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

26 Protect Yourself From Identity Theft, 6:30 p.m., Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

27 Graphic Novel Book Club, 6 p.m., for grades 3-5, Cora J. Belden Library, 33 Church St., 860-258-7621 or rockyhilllibrary.info

Is your club, community organization, school or house of worship holding an event open to the general public? If so, please send us the details for inclusion in our calendar. Email your events to Mark Jahne at mjahne@turleyct.com or mail them to Turley CT Community Publications, 540 Hopmeadow St., Simsbury, CT 06070.

Events spotlight

Spring 5K Walk/Race

April 9, 9 a.m.
Griswold Middle School
144 Bailey Road
860-258-7621 or cora@rocky-hillct.gov

The Cora J. Belden Library will host this 5K Race/Walk and Kids Run fundraiser. The main event steps off at 9 a.m., followed by a Kids Run at 9:05. Register at plattsys.com/waspeview.asp?eventid=1491. Registration is $25 per person ($30 on race day) and $10 per person for children. All proceeds will benefit the library.

Poetry Reading and Open Mic Night

April 12, 6:30 p.m.
Cora J. Belden Library
33 Church St.
860-258-7623

In celebration of National Poetry Month, and in commemoration of the late poet and Rocky Hill educator William Edward McMahon, the Connecticut Poetry Society, Middletown Chapter, and the Cora J. Belden Library are co-sponsoring this second annual poetry night. There will be a reading of his poem "Stone Wall, Broken." The program will include readings by featured poets Charles Chase, Pamela Guinan, Suzy Lamson, Cynthia Peck, Garrett Phallen, Margaret Plaganis and Shelly Weinberg. Those planning to attend are asked to register in advance.

Friends Spring Book Sale

April 23-24
Cora J. Belden Library
33 Church St.
cjbfriends.org

The Friends of the Library sponsor this annual event. Choose from thousands of new and gently used books (hard covers and paperbacks), music CDs, audio books and DVDs. Proceeds from the sale will help fund many library programs and activities. Saturday sale hours are 11 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. and Sunday hours are noon to 3 p.m. On Sunday, fill a bag for $7.

Support Dennis Clair

Support Dennis Clair

April 24, 1-5 p.m.
Chicago Sam's
51 Shunpike Road, Cromwell
860-690-3444

This event will raise money to support Rocky Hill resident Dennis Clair, who is fighting a battle against liver cancer. The suggested donation is $50 but any size donation will be accepted at the door. Participants will enjoy a buffet meal and cash bar. **RHL**

Bill McMahon

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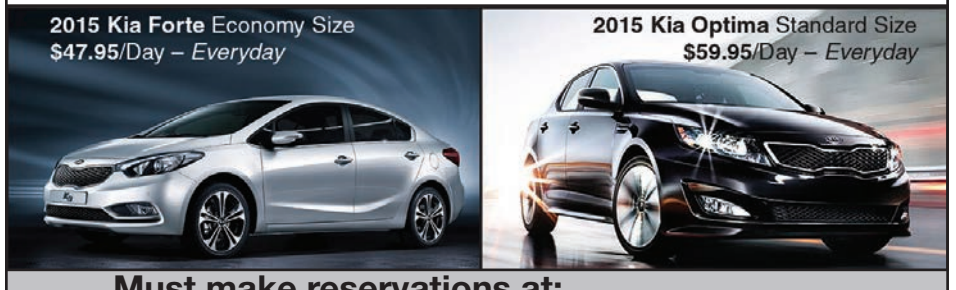

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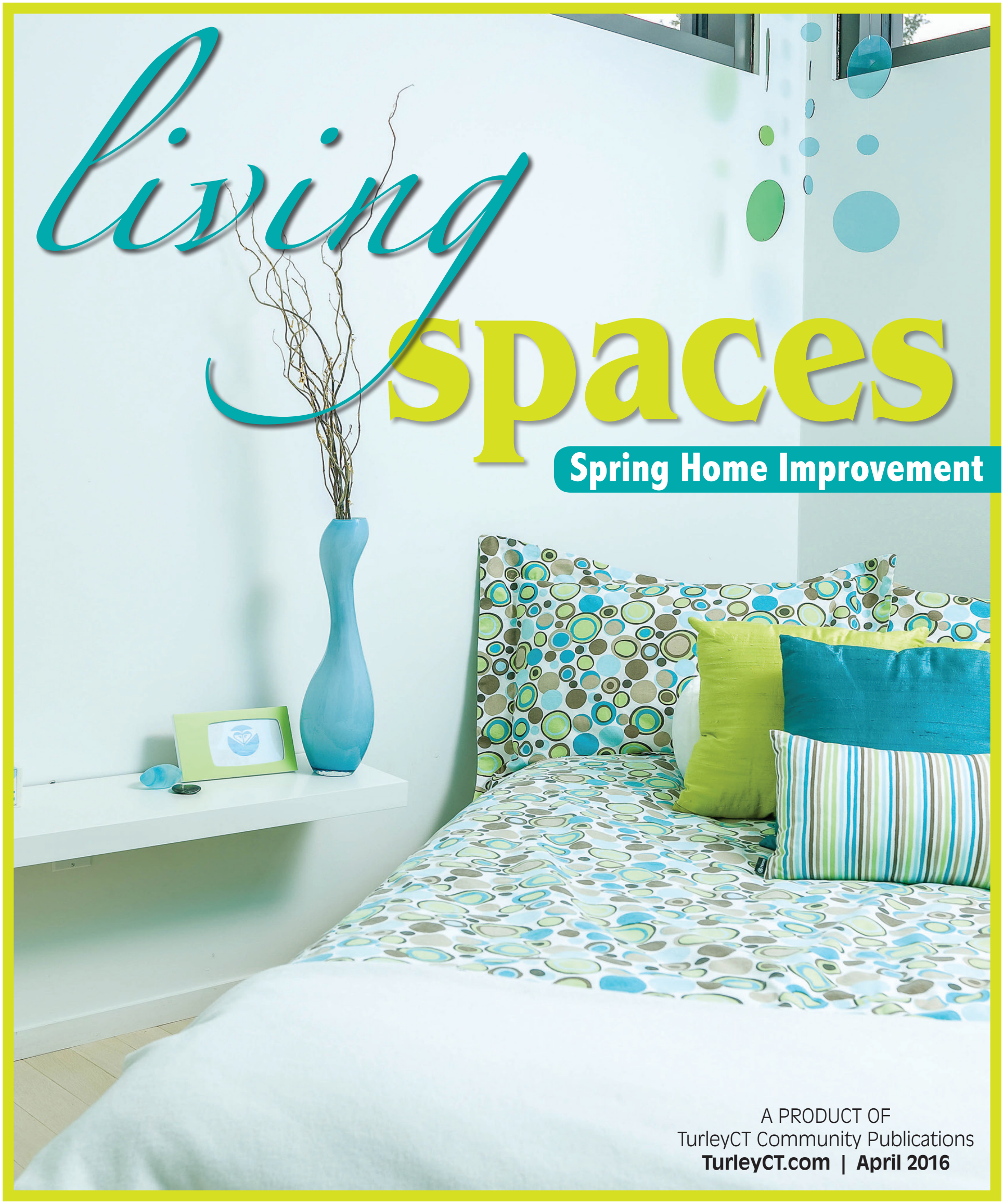
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Staging to stay

Experts offer advice on how to fall in love with your home again

by Alicia B. Smith
Staff Writer

Infinite Home clients remade their bedroom into a warm and inviting space with new furniture and a rug. The fireplace came from another room in their house.

Courtesy photos

You loved it enough to buy your home all those years ago, but time has taken the gleam off the old abode and now you are ready to get out.

Circumstances require that some people move, but for those who truly would rather stay put but are tired of the same old furniture and fixings – there's a solution. Learn ways to make your home fresh and fall in love with it all over again.

Home stagers assist clients in making their houses beautiful so that potential buyers will envision themselves living in the space and make an offer. Their tips and techniques can also help you see your home in a new light.

Tamatha Wolfel, stager and owner of Infinite Home Design in Wethersfield, said, "There are many ways you can freshen up your house if you want to put in the time; it can change the entire look."

When working with clients to sell their home, Wolfel suggests decluttering, removing odors and cleaning windows.

"The first rule of thumb is if it's seven years old, it should go," Wolfel said. "That is the cycle of trends."

Another detractor is clutter, no matter what kind – magazines, clothing or odd collections of stuff – because clutter makes a space look dated and smaller than it actually is. Wolfel suggests

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using bags to sort items: one for things to keep, one for things that can be sold and another for items to throw out.

This is also a great time to go through the home and bring in new accessories, from curtains and throw pillows to new lamps, or just new lampshades and centerpieces. Accessories can update a space and add pops of color and texture all for a relatively small monetary investment. Sometimes all it can take is rearranging the art on the walls.

"The first rule of thumb is if it's seven years old, it should go. That is the cycle of trends."

– Tamatha Wolfel, Infinite Home Design

For those with some more time, painting rooms with a fresh coat of paint and even a new color is another way to make a huge impact.

"Painting is one of the best ways to freshen up a room," Wolfel said.

And paint can be applied to more than just walls. Wolfel said that a fresh coat of paint on a wooden piece of furniture, along with some new handles, changes the look and feel of a room.

Chalkboard paint is big now and adding some to the surface of a coffee table is a fun way to update the piece.

"If you have a dark wood set from the '80s, it's solid wood and beautiful and you don't want to throw it away, do it with chalk paint and put some new handles on it and you have a whole new set," she said.

With a bit of muscle and a few hours, rearranging furniture is another option – keeping in mind the less is more philosophy. Using fewer pieces of furniture in a space gives it a modern look.

Sometimes the placement of items is the change maker. Keeping a less cluttered mantel is important. If there are bookcases in the room, rearrange the books so they are not strictly lined up horizontally on the shelves, rather, have a mix of horizontal and vertical books and add a decorative item or a vase next to a stack of books.

"A shelf that goes all the way across is not conducive to a fresh, modern look," Wolfel said.

Kitchens and bathrooms are still important to selling homes and Wolfel advised they not be overlooked when staging your own home to stay.

"I've seen the backsplash make and break deals," she said.

If it's too busy or gaudy, change it to something more contemporary.

Older cabinets can be a turnoff when selling a house, so chances are good that they are also not appealing to the homeowner either. They can be updated with a fresh coat of paint and new hardware.

Old counters? Apply a granite coating to create the look of this luxurious material, Wolfel suggested.

To update the bathroom, paint the old wooden vanity and buy new curtains; using only white towels "just makes it seem fresh and new," she said.

Other suggestions include painting the front door for a fresh and inviting feeling for you, not just your guests.

When working with clients, Wolfel will walk with them through each room of their home. Often, initially, they are hesitant to make changes, but by the time they get to the third room, Wolfel said they begin to understand why staging is important. Wolfel suggested letting a good, trusted friend go through your home with you and make suggestions.

"The thing is," she said, "even stagers, when we go to sell our house, we get other stagers to do it; we are just so used to our surroundings we justify it all and say OK. It's always good to get an outside view, someone who is not critical. They may come up with something you never thought of before."

LIVING Spaces

Courtesy photos

Danielle Needle was able to refresh this bathroom by removing outdated wallpaper, adding new lighting and getting rid of curtains that made the room dark.

A thorough inventory of a home's contents can help identify pieces that might work better in another space.

For those who might feel intimidated about the process or feel they don't have the design chops to make a difference, there is hope.

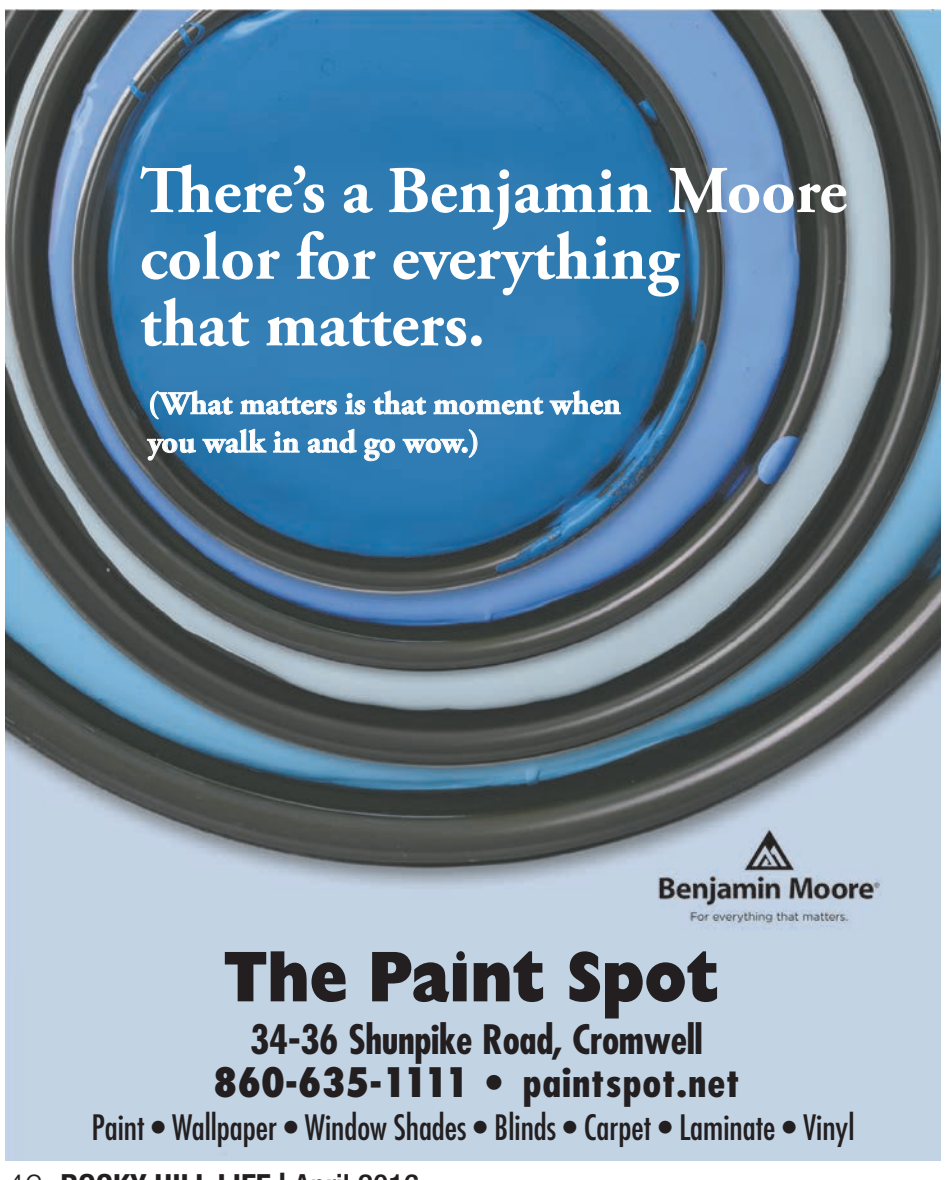
Simsbury-based Danielle Needle, a professional home stager and redesign consultant who also works as a realtor, suggests homeowners start by doing some research. Looking through home and garden magazines or searching online can help identify appealing designs to replicate.

"I think people feel they don't have enough space," Needle said, noting that a space can feel confining due to furniture placement and traffic patterns.

For Needle, who owned her own home staging company in Florida, the biggest thing a homeowner can do is "lighten and brighten."

This could mean something as simple as putting brighter light bulbs in lamps, adding new lighting or swapping out dark window treatments for lighter ones.

Paint, too, can go a long way to making an impact. It can help brighten up a room and Needle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suggested staying with neutral colors.

"Just putting on a neutral color makes a world of difference," she said.

Look down, too – at the flooring. Old carpet can make a space feel uninspired. If it's not possible to remove older carpeting, Needle suggested having it professionally cleaned, which will brighten it up and help with any odors that may be lurking. If you are able to install new flooring, selecting lighter colors will make a difference.

There are easy and reasonably priced ways to make the bathroom and kitchen stand out, too. Needle said laminate countertops could be painted, as can cabinets, which will have a big impact.

Adding new hardware also helps. If the budget allows, investing in new, updated appliances is another way to go.

For the bathrooms, Needle suggested putting in a pedestal sink, explaining it's new and takes up less space. There are other simple projects that Needle has done herself that can make a change for the better. If there is a dated piece of furniture that has sentimental value, adding a new slipcover is an option. Any artwork that homeowners love can have a fresh new vibe by just swapping the frame or painting the one it already has.

"They have that 'aha' moment, 'I never thought to do that.'" is often the response Needle hears from clients. "They are actually really grateful you helped them with a vision."

The vision shared by Ridgewood Designs co-owners Leslie Ryan and Libby Gallant includes softer colors and decluttering. Twenty years of experience has enabled them to make quick suggestions on how to fall in love with your home all over again.

Paint goes a long way toward updating a home, Ryan said, noting that gray is a popular color along with softer coastal colors.

"The trend is no longer the Crayola crayon box colors where every room is a different color," she said. Rather, choose one soft color and paint the rooms the same throughout the home.

Gallant suggested replacing old wallpaper, explaining that although wallpaper is in at the moment, painting is better, quicker and less expensive.

Decluttering is another way to improve the look of a home. That includes moving out extra furniture, clearing off shelves, removing outdated window treatments and taking everything off the refrigerator.

"Sometimes nothing is better than something," Ryan said.

It would be a good idea to deep clean the house as well, have carpets shampooed, or better yet, if there is hardwood underneath, remove the carpet all together.

Updating photographs on display also goes a long way in keeping things fresh.

"If your kids are in college and you still have their baby pictures out, it's time for a fresh look," Gallant said.

When switching out photos, it would be a good time to swap the frames, too, and opt for matching frames rather than a mix of colors or styles.

Those that match will help create a composed collection, Ryan said. Other ideas include having any popcorn ceilings in the home skim coated and painting the ceiling with clean, white paint.

Changing out light fixtures, Gallant said, was another way to update a room's look. They echoed other experts, saying time and money spent in the kitchen is well spent.

Gallant suggested painting the cabinets gray or white for a fresh and clean look.

For "an amazing transformation" in the bathroom, Ryan suggested giving the old pink, green or orange tub a white surface.

To freshen up a room, Gallant proposed adding pops of color with pillows and throws that can be purchased at any number of places.

"When we go to stage a home, sometimes it does happen. People come back and say, 'Wow, I don't want to leave,'" Ryan said. **RHL**

"The trend is no longer the Crayola crayon box colors where every room is a different color."

– Leslie Ryan, Ridgewood Designs

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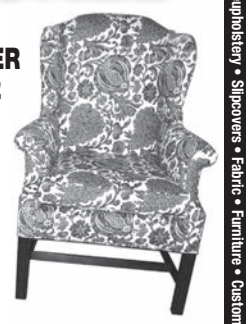

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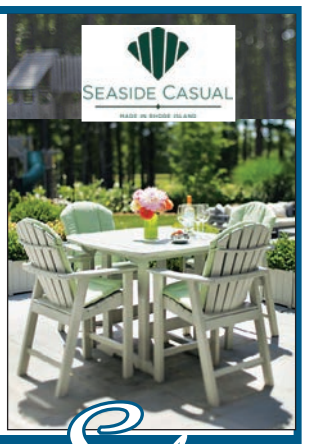

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Joanne Breen will be celebrating 38 years in real estate this fall. Together with her late business partner, Sam Sargis, Joanne has been a broker-owner of ERA Sargis-Breen in Newington since 1992 and they opened their 2nd office in Berlin in 2005.

Two-time recipients of ERA's national Jim Jackson Award for Customer Satisfaction, 2012 ERA Hall of Fame inductee and 2014 Commitment to Excellence Award winner, Joanne attributes her success and that of her company to paying attention to the details of each transaction and treating every client like family. Joanne has never lost her enthusiasm for real estate whether it be training agents new to the business, working with clients or interacting with other realtors. Joanne is 2016 President of the Greater Hartford Association of Realtors which has over 3500 members. Always keeping an eye to the future, Joanne is especially excited about ERA's new ZAP internet platform which is taking the real estate industry to a whole new level of customer service that she and her sales associates can offer their clients.

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Ask the experts

The LIFE papers asked local real estate experts a few questions related to the current real estate market. Here is what they had to say:

Q. What advice do you have for buyers and sellers in the current market?

A. "Here is my advice to buyers and sellers in today's market: do not wait. Sellers: many homeowners feel that prices will go higher and so they'd like to wait for that. Anyone who bought in 2007 or before bought at the height of the real estate market and are eagerly waiting for those prices to return. Some homeowners like to wait until the "spring market." In the winter months, inventory is typically lower, therefore there is less competition. In the spring, there is always a flood on homes coming on the market and now you are competing with much more inventory. Buyers: when the market is busiest in the spring, do not hesitate to make an offer on a home you love. Chances are one or more other buyers are also in love with that home. By waiting, two things can happen: the house gets sold while you are waiting, or you get into a multiple offer situation."

-Rosemary Gunning, sales manager, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, West Hartford

A. "My advice for buyers is to narrow down your search to what is manageable. Pick your top three towns and start there. Stay within a tight price range with no more than a $25,000-$30,000 variance. Additionally, try to look beyond the minor cosmetic issues that can make a house look dated. You might be passing up a gem just because it doesn't have that Pottery Barn look. Lastly, don't wait too long to make the offer when you see what you want. If you perceive it to be a good deal, someone else will too and then you could end up in a bidding war. For sellers, come out of the gate with your house looking its absolute best. Clear out the clutter, remove excess furniture in rooms and make the house sparkle so it is "showroom ready." If you can improve the look of a room by just painting it or removing some wallpaper, do it. Even minor cosmetic work can lower the final sale price of your home by thousands of dollars if buyers perceive it as needing "a lot of work." Price your house aggressively. This is no market to speculate; and the longer that house sits on the market, the lower the final sale price."

-Joanne Breen, broker/owner, ERA Sargis-Breen Real Estate Co., Newington

A. "My advice is to be flexible. The market is in transition. There are homes that are going under contract with multiple offers right away and there are homes that are still sitting for many months. Buyers and sellers should heed the advice of their licensed agent and be prepared to adjust their buying and selling goals accordingly. Overall, the market is heading up, so it is a great time to buy with rates still at historic lows."

-Robert L. Levine, broker/owner, Hart Real Estate LLC, West Hartford

Q. What misconceptions are common among buyers and sellers?

A. "There are many real estate Internet sites that purport to be the resource to use to estimate value of the home you are selling or buying. While they can be helpful tools, the best way to understand the current real estate climate and get a more accurate value on your home is to use the professional services of a licensed Realtor. A misconception is that sellers and buyers net more money not using a Realtor. In fact, statistics show that sellers who use Realtors net more money. Buyers who use a buyer's agent are more successful in attaining their real estate goals."

-Margaret Wilcox, Realtor, William Raveis, Glastonbury

A. "The biggest one buyers and sellers have regarding our business is about how agents get paid. Most people seem to think the agent gets the whole commission for him or herself. In reality, the commission is split up between several entities. In the end, the agent may only make 1 or 2 percent of a 6 percent commission. Out of this, the agents pay all their expenses, including the cost of equipment necessary to run their businesses. Any additional professional training that agents take is also their financial responsibility. Our industry has high business and ethical standards, to which agents pledge to adhere.

An agent cannot risk losing his/her license by unethical behavior, even when asked by a client to do so (which happens more often than one might guess). Another common misconception right now, specifically held by buyers, is that if they sign a Buyer Representation Agreement with a broker to look at properties, they will be obligated to pay the commission if they buy one. In fact, 99.99 percent of the time, the seller still pays the total commission for rentals as well as property sales."

-Jane von Holzhausen, manager, Coldwell Banker Residential Brokerage, Avon

"When the market is busiest in the spring, do not hesitate to make an offer on a home you love. Chances are one or more other buyers are also in love with that home."

-Rosemary Gunning

A. "The most common misconception among sellers today is that prices are on the rise. In fact, they are flat and even trending down for the past several years.

The volume of sales statewide was up nearly 20 percent in 2015, but the median value of homes statewide was down nearly 5 percent. In January 2016, sales were up almost 25 percent from last January, but the median sales price was still flat. Another common misconception of sellers is that the process to sell their property will be drawn out. If a property is priced accurately, the average number of days on market is under 30 days, and there are actually homes that are receiving multiple bids. There is a shortage of good inventory in today's marketplace.

As far as buyers go, the most common misconception is that the house they will buy will be perfect. Buyers are taking home inspection reports too literally. Sellers are not willing to upgrade every item in their home just because they aren't brand new in order to consummate a sale. This situation is creating negotiating difficulties between buyers and sellers."

-Mike Tracy, office leader, Berkshire Hathaway New England Properties, Newington

Q. What trends in pricing have you noticed over the last six months?

A. "Prices on homes that are in good condition and priced right are increasing. They are selling very quickly, especially in the first time homebuyer range: $175,000-$350,000. It's very competitive and sellers are paying attention. There are a lot of buyers out there, and not a vast amount of inventory. However, buyers are still not willing to pay whatever the seller wants. They are very informed and set ideals for what they can pay."

-Tracy McCleary, office manager, Re/Max Precision, Newington

Q. How are current mortgage rates impacting buying and selling?

A. "The current rates are still amazing, but the fact is they are rising, and if someone is planning on getting into a house, now is the time to do it. As long as the buyer gets a standard, non-variable rate, even though taxes and other expenses will go up over time, your interest rate won't. The rates still are so low that paying down the principle of a loan is much easier and makes owning a home affordable."

-Tracy McCleary, office manager, Re/Max Precision, Newington **RHL**

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I was born in Poland and came to America in 1980. At that time in Poland, all housing belonged to the government, so selling real estate seemed like such as unusual path for me. Since then I have been serving my clients for 28 years!

Before I stated my own firm, I worked for several other real estate agencies for 22 years. I opened Complete Real Estate in 2012. For many years I worked exclusively as a buyers agent, so I understand all of the problems and issues associated with purchasing a home. This gives me the upper hand when I represent sellers, because I know how to ensure a smooth transaction.

Complete Real Estate is a small, family owned business. Both of my sons, who are UConn graduates workd with me. We are passionate about real estate, and our mission is client satisfaction. I offer honesty, integrity, experience, education, and the utmost of care and love for what I do.

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Spring cleaning

Make the most of this annual ritual

Compiled by Lynn Woike

Area experts offer tricks of the trade when tackling spring cleaning.

"Break down spring cleaning projects into tasks that can be managed in the time you have available. It could be a room at a time, or even one drawer or one shelf a day. This method prevents you from becoming overwhelmed and allows you to better focus on a particular task." *Heather Feinsinger, owner, Re-Style Your Closets LLC, Simsbury*

"Assemble a cleaning basket or bucket with all the supplies you'll need. Carry it from room to room to tackle jobs both big and small so you'll have all your gear in one handy container." *Sarah Soboleski, owner, Classically Organized, Glastonbury*

"The products you use can help with the cleaning process. I really love straight alcohol on mirrors because of the residue build-up from hair products and makeup. It also works well on glass shower door soap scum with baking soda and a Magic Eraser. Just be careful that there is not a sealant on the shower door and do not get any on brass framing or wood." *Sandy Wheeler of Morawski Cleaning LLC, West Simsbury*

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LIVING Spaces

"If you haven't worn it in a year, toss it. Also, toss it if you don't absolutely love it. Don't try to convince yourself you're going to wear that bridesmaid dress again when you hated wearing it the first time."
Mike Pendergast, owner, Great Closets of New England, Simsbury

"Pick one corner in the room as your starting point and move in a circular path from there. Always start on high surfaces and work your way down to the floor."
Sarah Soboleski, owner, Classically Organized, Glastonbury

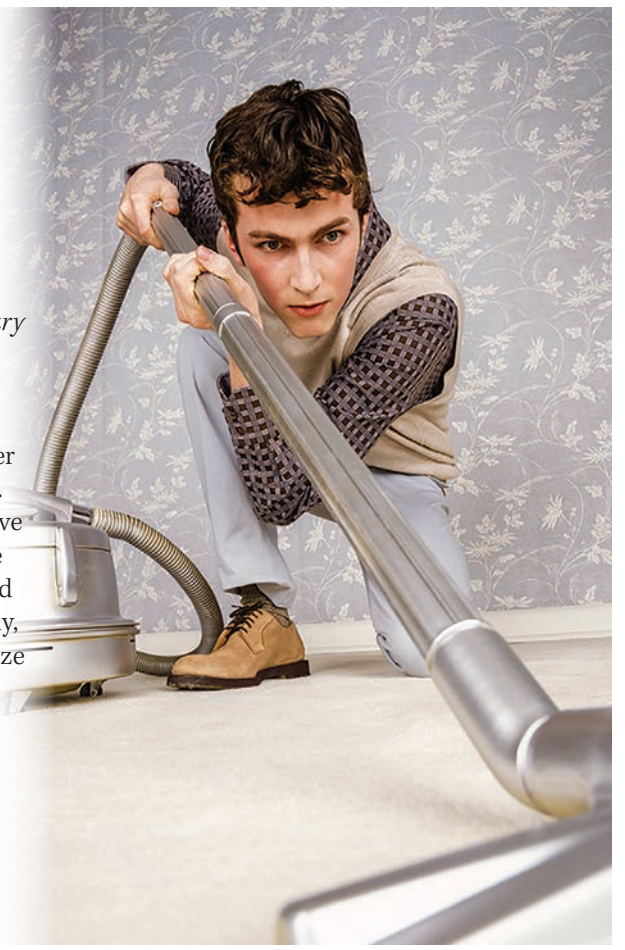
"Devise a cleaning schedule once the bulk of the spring cleaning is done so it won't seem so daunting next year: mudroom on Mondays, toilets and tubs on Tuesdays, workspace on Wednesdays, etc."
Sarah Soboleski, owner, Classically Organized, Glastonbury

"Toss expired foods and spices in the pantry. Sanitize the refrigerator and freezer. Reorganize the pantry, cupboards, refrigerator and freezer, rotating soon-to-expire ingredients to the front. Sanitize fridge and freezer."
Emily Weissberg, owner, Organize Me! By Emily Weissberg, Avon

"Groove to some upbeat music while you work. A few good tunes will keep you moving and boost your spirits. The 'Frozen' movie theme song 'Let it Go' comes to mind as you release the dust and clutter from your home."
Sarah Soboleski, owner, Classically Organized, Glastonbury

"Identify a spot for donations. As you begin your spring cleaning, it's always good to purge any unwanted or unloved items you find. It helps to have a box or bag to corral these things to take to your local charity. Continue to use the spot throughout the year so you make it a habit to place your castoffs in this designated location."
Sarah Soboleski, owner, Classically Organized, Glastonbury

"When handling large projects such as a garage, choose a corner and focus only on that one area. Discard the true garbage. Remove unwanted items that have some value and can be sold or donated and place them elsewhere. Lastly, create a better system to organize and store what's left."
Donna Finocchiaro, owner, Organized East of the River, Marlborough **RHL**



Next month we suggest how and where to get rid of items you no longer want or need.

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A place for everything *and everything in its place*

Compiled by Lynn Woike

Create order from chaos throughout your house with these helpful organizing tips from local experts.

Boxes

"For organization, I like boxes and bins, but the important thing is for the contents to be 'transparent.' I don't mean that the box or bin needs to be clear, only that labeling is crucial. If you have small children who you'd like to encourage to pick up after themselves, placing pictures of the items contained in the bins can help. And before you think about throwing everything in the bins just to clean up the house, purge first. Do you really need 10 cell phone chargers?" *–Monica Katzen, owner, Mind My Life, Simsbury*

Suitcases

"Vintage suitcases are great for storage – they can be stacked and used as an end table or nightstand next to a sofa or bed. They can hold anything from remote controls and magazines to sheets and towels for guests." *–Arlene Carr, owner, Revival Home, West Hartford*

Clear bins

"My favorite products are clear Sterilize bins with white lids. They come in many sizes, are affordable, stack well and fit portable shelving units typically used in basements, garages and closets. I place content labels on one long and one short side for easy viewing. Use the large 56-quart bins for soft goods – clothing, stuffed animals, bedding – and the 20-quart ones for light bulbs, extension cords, candles, paper goods and other items." *–Donna Finocchiaro, owner, Organized East of the River, Marlborough*

Baskets

"Easily retrieve items stored in your pantry, refrigerator, craft closet or playroom with these grab-and-go baskets. You can purchase them at most big box stores and they come in different colors and sizes." *–Sarah Soboleski, owner, Classically Organized, Glastonbury*

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LIVING Spaces

Door Rack

"Organizers that go over or behind doors are a boon for people with limited space. These often overlooked areas can be used to store almost anything, including shoes, pantry items, cleaning supplies and craft materials." *–Heather Feinsinger, owner, Re-Style Your Closets LLC, Simsbury*

Hooks

"Garage storage space is limited for most of us and it usually houses odd-shaped tools as well. To maximize the space, use walls effectively. Hooks are a perfect way to get things off the floor." *–Mike Pendergast, owner, Great Closets of New England, Simsbury*

Chinese boxes

"Everything from paper clips, cotton balls and tea to sewing supplies can be neatly organized in a collection of colorful antique Chinese cloisonne boxes. They look great on a desk or dresser." – *Arlene Carr, owner, Revival Home, West Hartford.*
RHL

Lockers

"Putting lockers by your daily entrance gives everyone in the family a place to store items that come and go regularly – from coats and gloves to backpacks and sporting equipment. Durable and fun, lockers come in a variety of styles that can also help organize mud rooms, game rooms, bedrooms, bathrooms and garages." *–Paul Calafiore, owner, DreamMaker Bath and Kitchen, Newington*

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Rummage Sale

SPRING RUMMAGE SALE - West Hartford United Methodist Church, 1358 New Britain Ave., West Hartford. Exit 40 off I-84, 1 block east of Westfarms Mall. Friday, April 8, 7-9pm. Admission $1.00. Saturday April 9, 8am - 1pm. Bag Sale - Free Admission. Items: clothing, shoes, handbags, kitchen items, domesitics, toys, books, small furniture, household items. Questions? Please call 860-521-7766

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BY MARK DIXON
WFSB METEOROLOGIST [AMS]

Winter 2015-16, an interesting one!

In the more than 110 years of record keeping, the average temperature for this winter of 35.1° places it in 2nd place for warmest. This, despite 2 days in February with low temperatures at -12° at Windsor Locks! The winter of 2001-02 remains at the top of the list with an average temperature of 35.2.°

Other records for the season: 31 days with a high temperature of at least 50° (previously: 26 days during the winter of 1932-33); also 9 days with a high of at least 60° (previously: 7 days during the winter of 1975-76 and that of 1953-54).

The warm weather this winter can be attributed, in large part, to a very strong El Nino. December was the warmest on record at an amazing 11.7° above average! January was 4.1° warmer than average, February came in at 2.3° above.

During the season, Windsor Locks had 11.08" of precipitation (rain, plus the water equivalent of snow and ice), 1.52" above average. Total snowfall was only 17.1", 13.6" below average (most of the snow occurred during the month of February with 14.2"). This will not be the least snowy winter on record – that honor still goes to the winter of 1936-37 when only 14.7" of snow was measured for Greater Hartford. **RHL**

Happy Spring!

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